RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI:

Or, the PRINCIPLES of

Morality and Chriſtianity

ILLUSTRATED FROM

A View of the UNIVERSE, and of MAN's Situation on it.

By WILLIAM HAY, Eſq;

Humbly inſcribed to the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

ARTHUR ONSLOW,

Speaker of the Houſe of Commons.

Diſceteque, O miſeri! & cauſas cognoſcite rerum,
Quid ſumus, & quidnam victuri gignimur; ordo
Quis datus: ——————
——————quem te Deus eſſe
Juſſit, & humanâ quâ parte locatus es in re.

PERSIUS, Sat. 3.

Attend then, wretched Youth! in Time attend,
To every natural Cauſe, and moral End.
Look into MAN, with philoſophic Eye:
Conſider WHAT we are, conſider WHY.
Know we are poſted HERE, by Power Divine;
And think what Poſt, that Power has deſtin'd thine.

A Tranſlation in 1742.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall. 1754.

RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI:

Or, the Principles of

Morality and Christianity

ILLUSTRATED FROM

A View of the UNIVERSE, and of

MAN's Situation on it.

By WILLIAM HAY, Esq;



ARTHUR ONSLOW,

Speaker of the House of Commons.

Hæccine, O mihi! fe cuiâs complectie rerum,
Quid homo, & quâ manum victum Gignimur; ordo
Quis datus: ——— quem te Deus effe
Justum, & humana qui parva locatus in re.

Persius, Sat. 3.

Attend then, wretched Youth! to Time attend,
To every natural Cause, and moral End.
Look into MAN, with philosophic Eye:
Consider WHAT we are, consider WHY.
Know we are form'd HERE, by Power Divine;
And think what Fate, that Power has destin'd thine.

A Translation in 1754.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall. 1754.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

ARTHUR ONSLOW,

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

AND

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL,

THIS ESSAY IS INSCRIBED AND SUBMITTED, WITH GREAT AND DUE ESTEEM AND VENERATION,

BY

HIS MOST OBLIGED,

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

W. HAY.

PREFACE.

THE following Piece has *
now been compoſed above
fifteen Months; and con-
ſequently can have no Re-
ference to any Events, which made
their Appearance laſt Year. All the
Time it was in hand, the Author
ſcrupulouſly avoided reading any
thing new on the Points, which
were the principal Subjects of his
Conſideration: reſolving to keep

* February 10, 1753.

his

PREFACE.

THE following Piece has * now been compoſed above fifteen Months: and conſequently can have no Reference to any Writings, which made their Appearance laſt Year. All the Time it was in hand, the Author ſcrupulouſly avoided reading any thing new on the Points, which were the principal Subjects of his Conſideration: reſolving to keep

* February 10. 1753.

his

his Mind as unbiaſſed as poſſible; that any Opinions, which he ſhould advance, might be, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, his OWN.

His great END is, by rectifying Mens Ideas, and by removing Vulgar Prejudices, to fix RELIGION on a FIRM BASIS.

In a Matter ſo intereſting and important, and of ſuch general Concern to Mankind, he thought it his Duty, not to be led by AUTHORITY or CUSTOM; but to follow NATURE and REASON; Guides, who afford the beſt Lights in every Search after Truth; and Interpreters of Scripture, who are leaſt fallible.

Thoſe

PREFACE.

Thoſe things, which on ſerious and mature Reflection appeared to him to be true, he here preſents without Diſguiſe to the World: and he hopes, that they will be read with the ſame CANDOR, with which they were writ.

PREFACE.

These things, which on serious and mature Reflection appeared to him to be true, he here presents without Disguise to the World: and he hopes, that they will be read with the same Candid which they were writ.

4 OC 58

Religio Philoſophi.

MAN is conſcious of his own Exiſtence: but ſeldom conſiders, WHERE, or WHAT, he is: and his Ignorance in theſe Particulars has ever been and will be the Source of his greateſt Errors.

He is placed on the third [a] Planet of our Solar Syſtem: that Syſtem but one among [b] numberleſs others: that Planet [c] neither the greateſt nor leaſt in that Syſtem. Yet

[a] The ſix primary Planets moving round our Sun are 1. Mercury. 2. Venus. 3. The Earth. 4. Mars. 5. Jupiter. 6. Saturn.

[b] The Followers of COPERNICUS with the greateſt Probability (almoſt Certainty) imagine each fixed Star to be a Sun with Planets (more or fewer) ſurrounding it, as our Planets ſurround the Sun; and all ſuch Planets to be inhabited as well as the Earth: for the Fixed Stars are luminous and ſparkling; which ſhews them to be of a fiery Subſtance like our Sun: and if they are of the ſame Nature, it is very probable they ſerve to a like Uſe.

[c] For Inſtance, Jupiter is much larger, and Mercury much leſs.

☞ *The Author aſks pardon of Perſons of Education for inſerting theſe Notes, which not one of them can want: But they were thought neceſſary to explain his Meaning to common Readers.*

ſo much does Nearneſs magnify Objects; that Man who inhabits this Planet will always continue to call it the World; to conſider it as ſuch; and himſelf as the only rational and moſt conſiderable Animal, in the World; and the Sun, Moon, and Stars (which appear ſo ſmall) as made and moving only for his uſe.

When I ſay Man, I mean the Generality of Mankind: for Geography and Aſtronomy have taught others another Language; who conſider our Globe but as one ſingle Link in the extenſive Chain, one ſmall Wheel in the immenſe Machine of the Univerſe: and Man its chief Inhabitant but as one Species among innumerable other Species of rational and intelligent Creatures.

This being Man's Situation; I would aſk him, who placed him on this Globe, and from whence he derives his Being? Will he ſay, from his Parents? Tho' the Manner of it he can never explain, I will admit it: and they theirs from their Parents;

rents; and ſo on; which preſuppoſes Parents ſtill to exiſt to communicate that Being, till it leads us up to ſome firſt Parents, who received theirs in another Manner. From whom did they receive it? It could not be from themſelves; they had not Being. It could not be from the Earth: Animals do not ſhoot up from thence; nor hath it a Power to produce any new Species: it muſt be from ſome other Cauſe: and that Cauſe muſt be ſome Wiſe and Intelligent Being, who could form an Animal of ſuch an exquiſite Frame; and endue it with Power to propagate its Species. And as by the ſame reaſoning we muſt trace every Species of Animals and Vegetables on this Globe up to ſome Original, which muſt have received its Exiſtence in another Manner; we muſt likewiſe conclude, that the ſame Wiſe Being, which created Man, created them alſo for the Ends to which they ſerve: and as this Globe ſerves for their Production, Sup-

port, and Habitation; we muſt likewiſe conclude, that He who created them, created this Globe alſo: and if this Globe or one Planet, then every Globe and every Planet within our Syſtem, as alſo the Sun the Center of it, which warms and invigorates the whole: and if our Syſtem, then every other Syſtem throughout the Univerſe. For it is impoſſible to conceive, that he who made One Wheel in the Machine, with which all the reſt correſpond, did not make the Whole.

By the Whole I would in this place be underſtood to mean every Fixed Star, which is luminous, with its ſurrounding Planets which are not ſo: which Fixed Star with its Planets taken together compoſe a Solar Syſtem by themſelves, ſeparate from the reſt; but which perhaps correſpond with the reſt as a Part to the Whole. And I mean, not only every Fixed Star viſible from our Earth; but if Teleſcopes were placed all round in the

the moſt remote of them, all new ones that might be diſcovered from thence; till the Teleſcopes ſtill removed on in the ſame manner, pointing from the ſame Center, ſhould look into a Vacant Space where nothing further can be deſcried. This I will call our Univerſe; and ſuch Vacant Space the End of our World: not the End of Nature: ſince beyond that Space may be many Aſſemblages of Bodies equally, or perhaps more numerous, wonderful and glorious. For tho' the material Globes are limited in Number; yet that Number may be ſo great as to exceed our Computation: and tho' they exiſt in ſome Part of Space, yet that Space is immenſe beyond our Imagination. It is indeed infinite and co-extenſive with the Deity, in whom (in the moſt literal Senſe) all things live, move, and have their Being.

But not to carry our Thoughts too far, and to loſe them in Infinity, I will call the Fixed Stars viſible to us, and to each other,

with their attendant Planets, the Univerſe. When this Univerſe began, or when it will end, or whether every Solar Syſtem in it began together, or will end together, GOD only knows: that which muſt have had a Beginning in Time, may as well have begun at one Time as another. It may be ſcarce Six Thouſand Years old, or it may be Sixty Millions: it may end to-morrow, or may laſt for ever: for he who at his Pleaſure created and preſerves it; can at his Pleaſure preſerve it on or annihilate it; or withour annihilating can change and vary it at his Pleaſure. He has made Matter ſuſceptible of all Forms he may be pleaſed to impreſs upon it; and the ſame Maſs differently diſpoſed may exhibit great Variety of Appearances and Species of Things. The ſame Star or ſame Planet may roll on in its uſual Courſe; and yet the Surface of it be ſo altered, as to occaſion a very memorable Æra in that Part. If a Fixed Star is cruſted over, ſo as no longer

longer to diſpenſe its Light, all its Planets in that Syſtem muſt ſhare the Calamity: but that Calamity reaches not to the other Fixed Stars. So if a particular Planet has its Surface altered, it affects not the other Planets of that Syſtem, but may be of great Importance in the Planet where it happens: if all things on it are deſtroyed, ſuch an Alteration with regard to thoſe that live on it, is equivalent to a total Deſtruction of the Univerſe; and when new Inhabitants are placed there, ſuch Renovation is equivalent to a new Creation. That ſuch Alterations may happen is certain, for all things are poſſible with GOD: that they ſhould happen is agreeable to his Wiſdom and Providence: that they have happened is almoſt certain from Phænomena viſible to us within our ſmall Sphere of Obſervation. [d] Have not new Stars appeared and old ones diſappeared? [e] Does

[d] Vid. LOWTHORP's Abridgment of the Philoſophical Tranſactions, Vol. i. p. 247.
[e] Ibid. p. 274. to 279.

not the Face of our own Sun vary? [f] Does not the Surface of one Planet appear regular? that of another broken and irregular, like the Fragment of ſomething once more entire? But more of this in another Place.

Having thus far conſidered WHERE I am; let me now conſider WHAT I am.

I am an Animal; and of that Species, which is ſuperior to all others on this Globe. Every Animal on this Globe, muſt have ſome Eſſence or Principle, diſtinct from the Body, reſiding in it; becauſe they are ſenſible of Impreſſions made on the Body, and are capable of making Impreſſions on the Body, and of moving it: which the Body alone cannot do; for the Body is Matter, and Matter however varied in Form is incapable of Senſe and Self-motion: and a Clod of Earth, a Stone, a Chair, or a Table, might feel and move,

[f] Ibid. 382. Phaſis of Jupiter. 423 of Mars. 425 of Venus. Thoſe of the Earth and Moon are viſible without a Teleſcope: and we have Maps of both.

as well as a Horſe, a Dog, or a Man, if theſe laſt had not ſome Eſſence or Principle united or aſſociated to their outward Frame diſtinct from it.

This Eſſence or Principle I call Spirit, to diſtinguiſh it from Matter; and the particular Spirit aſſociated to the Body of any Animal, the Soul of that Animal. How the Soul acts on the Body of an Animal, I know not; that it does, I know from the Effect. But all Motions in the Body do not proceed from the Soul, which is only the Cauſe of Voluntary Motion. The Circulation of the Blood and Juices of the Body is owing to the ſame Natural Cauſes, as the Circulation of the Sap in Vegetables is owing; and as a Plant may be improved or impaired by a proper or improper Manure, Air, Expoſure, or Culture; ſo may the Body of an Animal. While the Body is kept in Order, the Soul is eaſy; when it is not, the Soul is in Pain: when the Functions of the Body ceaſe, the

the Soul quits the Aſſociation; but exiſts in a ſeparate State, unleſs GOD pleaſes to annihilate it. For as every Particle of the Body (however transformed) will remain after the Separation; ſo will the Soul alſo: for whatever hath once received a Being from GOD, cannot ceaſe to be without his Interpoſition.

The Dignity of every Animal on this Globe riſes according to the Number and Extent of the Faculties of the Soul. It would be difficult to marſhal them all by this Rule. But this Rule gives Man the Precedence, and the Dominion and Government of the reſt. What becomes of the Souls of Brute Animals after a Separation from their Bodies, imports not Man to know: but it is of the greateſt Conſequence to him to conſider the Nature of his own Soul; and what Hopes he can form from thence of its future State; without which the little Time he

paſſes

paſſes on this Globe is of very little Conſequence.

It is uſeleſs to enquire whether the Soul of Man is firſt aſſociated to the Body in the Womb; or whether it reſides principally or altogether in the Brain. Whatever the Caſe be, in thoſe Inſtances it reſembles the Soul of Brutes; as it does in ſome others. It has the ſame Affection for the Body, the ſame Deſire to preſerve it, the ſame Inclination to propagate its own Species, and to mix in Society with them, and is affected with the ſame Paſſions of Joy, Grief, Anger, and the like.

But then there is this great Difference. It has more Reaſon, to curb and controul thoſe Appetites and Paſſions: before an Action, to foreſee the Conſequence; and after it, to reflect on it with Pleaſure or Remorſe: to compare paſt Things with preſent, and preſent with future: little of which is to be obſerved in Brutes, whoſe Ideas ſeem confined to the preſent Time

and

and Occaſion, and their Capacities not to admit of much Improvement.

But the Soul of Man is capable of perpetual Improvement. The little Knowledge he gains by Reading, Converſation, or Contemplation, ſtill excites his Thirſt after more: and though he can make but ſmall Progreſs in his preſent State, his Ambition is boundleſs: he can know but little, and yet he wants to know all. He is confined to a Point of Time in this Life; yet extends his Views backwards and forwards through Millions of Ages, till he is loſt in Eternity. He is confined to ſome minute Part of this Globe; yet while his Feet ſtand on it, his Soul is travelling to every Globe, traverſing immenſe Spaces from World to World, till he at laſt is loſt in Infinity. He wants to be acquainted with Nature and with GOD, and dreads the Thoughts of Annihilation. And can it be imagined that GOD will annihilate a Being in its own

own Nature immortal, and which he hath indued with ſuch a Paſſion for Immortality? or that he would amuſe and delude Man in vain with a ſublime Capacity and a laudable Ambition to contemplate him and his Works, and never give him the Opportunity of being gratified? Moſt unworthy Notions of the Deity! from whoſe Goodneſs alone, without other Argument, I have reaſon to be convinced that my Soul is immortal.

Since then GOD hath given to Man an immortal Soul, with Faculties ſuperior to thoſe of other Animals on this Globe; Man ought in Gratitude to return a conſtant Tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to GOD who gave them.

When I raiſe my Thoughts from our own Globe, and contemplate the general Frame of the Material World, and the Analogy of its Parts, I am firmly convinced that there are, not only in the Planets of our own Solar Syſtem,

but

but in each of the numberleſs Planets throughout the Univerſe, many Species of living Creatures, with Bodies formed and ſupported from the Materials of their reſpective Globes, which after propagating their Kind return again to the common Maſs: reſembling terreſtrial Animals in theſe Particulars; though from Difference of Situation they muſt be very unlike them in bodily Frame and Conſtitution. I am perſuaded too, that there is on every Globe, as well as ours, ſome one Species ſuperior to and ruling over the reſt, with a Mind capable of ſearching out GOD in his Works, and adoring his Providence and Goodneſs.

Hence I conclude; that Praiſe and Thankſgiving are continually aſcending to his Throne, not only from this Spot of ours, but at the ſame Inſtant from every Quarter of the Univerſe: every Globe joining with the others, Man with many Creatures to him unknown, and they with him,

him, in One Chorus, in One Anthem, to One great Author of their Being. It is a general Religion, a joint Communion, a Universal Church; which, tho' differing throughout in Forms and Ceremonies, yet is a Stranger to Sects and Divisions; entirely united in Spirit, and directing their Halelujahs to one Object in Gratitude for their Being and Preservation. There is nothing can extend our Charity more than this Thought; which lifts it from the Earth to the Skies; and bids us look not only on all Men as our Neighbours; but on all Mortal Intelligent Beings throughout the immense Space of the Universe: and bids us love them, not as our own Species, but as our Fellow-creatures, and as Members of the same Church and Communion; united to us in the same Spirit and Bond of Devotion.

And as GOD has united all Intelligent Creatures by the same Principles of Religion; so has he in the same Principles of Morality. It is a Universal Principle of

Morality,

Morality, to love one another; and therefore to hurt or deſtroy their own Species is an enormous Crime in every Globe of the Univerſe. Another Univerſal Principle of Morality is, to uſe the Objects around them (which the Scripture calls GOD's Creatures; and which in common Speech one may call the Furniture of their Globe or Habitation) to the Ends for which they were deſigned; and therefore the Abuſe of them is every where an immoral Action. For the Nature of Good and Evil conſiſts entirely in preſerving or confounding that Order of Things which GOD hath eſtabliſhed, and which none but GOD himſelf can ſuperſede.

Though GOD hath eſtabliſhed a good Order which ought to be preſerved by his Creatures, yet it is certain, that for ſome great and hidden Ends of his Providence, he hath beſtowed on Material Intellectual Beings a Liberty of Action, which they may employ to confound that Order. Man does

many

many immoral Actions daily on this Globe: and it is moſt probable, that the Animals reſiding in many other Globes do the ſame. Since therefore God hath made them liable to Sin, we muſt conclude that out of his Goodneſs he uſes many Methods to recal them to a Senſe of their Duty; by Signs, and by Wonders; by Inſtruction, and by Correction. Which may be called his Moral Diſpenſations, and which may be as various as the Globes themſelves; and which are carried on in each according to his good Pleaſure. In ſome, the whole Colony may be deſtroyed, and another created. In others, the Face of the Globe may be altered to puniſh the Inhabitants: for the Lord maketh a fruitful Land barren for the Sins of them that dwell therein. And as the Moral Tranſactions in one Globe are diſtinct from thoſe of another; ſo neither will any Natural Alteration on the Surface of one at all af-

fect the reſt: for however Forms are there altered, the Quantity of Matter continues the ſame, and the Globe will roll on in its old Courſe. And we in fact obſerve a Difference in the Surface of the Planets of our own Syſtem. The Surface of the Moon ſeems broken and irregular like that of her Principal the Earth, as if ſhe had ſympathized with her Fate: whilſt the Belts of Jupiter ſhew the Land and Sea to be regularly diſpoſed, as if he ſtill continued in his original State; or after ſome Changes were reſtored to it again: For as Houſes are deſtroyed and rebuilt; or the Apartments or Furniture altered; ſo may it be with theſe Globes: and that after ſome Generations, the Species of Men or other Creatures may become extinct as well as private Families: and when one Colony is deſtroyed, another may be planted in their ſtead.

And let not ſuch Changes be thought unnatural, or to derogate from the Perfection

fection of GOD's Works. I will ſuppoſe (which perhaps may not be the Caſe) that he created all the Globes of the Univerſe together; and that they are ſo many Wheels in that vaſt Machine, which have a mutual Connection and Dependance, and will roll on together till the whole is deſtroyed, if ever it be his Pleaſure to deſtroy it. But I ſee no reaſon, why the ſeveral Species of Material Beings on each Globe, the Individuals of which are continually ariſing from it, and returning to it again, may not have their Periods as well as the Individuals themſelves: or why they may not be again renewed; or others be ſubſtituted in their place: or why the whole Surface of a Globe may not undergo a Change. Can the Potter mould the ſame Maſs into Variety of Utenſils? Can the Painter ſtrike the Figures off his Canvas, and place on it others of the ſame or of a different Colour and Shape? And cannot

GOD at his pleaſure effect the like Changes to anſwer the wiſe Ends of his Providence? Which Changes are far from confounding or deforming the general Syſtem of the Univerſe.

There is a particular Diſpenſation of Providence to each Globe: to carry on the Ends of which all Alterations on it are regulated: and theſe Alterations cannot in the Courſe of Nature in the leaſt affect other Globes. They are as much unknown there as the Tranſactions of the Inhabitants. Some few great ones only may perhaps be obſerved through a Glaſs darkly from ſome neighbouring Planet, though the Cauſe remain a Secret. For inſtance; when our own Globe was overflowed immediately before the Creation of ADAM, and again in the Days of NOAH, Aſtronomers in Mars, Venus, or the Moon might obſerve it darker, than either before or after thoſe Periods; and perhaps they will hereafter obſerve it of a more ruddy Com-

Complection at the time of the general Conflagration; and when a New Earth, like a Phenix, ſhall riſe out of its Aſhes, will ſee it reſume its former Hue: though the Spots of Land and Water, they were before acquainted with, may by ſuch Alterations have changed their Situation.

Mens Obſervations are very limited, both in Time and Space: to their own Age and the Hiſtory of a few Centuries before them: to their own Globe, and that too in great part unknown: and becauſe they have never ſeen or read of ſuch great Alterations, they are apt to conclude, that they never did, can, or will happen: But a thing is no leſs poſſible, becauſe rare: and a thing we account rare may be very common in the general Courſe of Nature: it is a rare thing for a Perſon to be born or to die in a private Family; perhaps it does not happen once in a Year: in a great City it happens every Day; in a great Kingdom every Hour,

and in ſome Part of the Earth certainly every Moment. So a general Deluge or Conflagration, which may not happen in thouſands of Years on our Globe, may be Events that happen every Moment in ſome or other of the innumerable Globes diſperſed through the Univerſe.

Again: Men obſerving the Beauty, Harmony, and Relation of Creatures on Earth; and the regular and uniform Production of each Species of them, are too apt from thence to conclude, that every thing muſt for ever continue in the ſame Courſe, and can be in no other; and that the Order of the World in the State they find it is the only perfect Image of the Idea of GOD. But can it be denied, that he who created for his Pleaſure, may for his Pleaſure alter or deſtroy? And if he ſhould do ſo; that he may rebuild in the ſame or any other Manner? For though it would be Blaſphemy to ſay, that the Works of GOD are not good, and wiſely conducted

in

in every State; it would equally be ſo to advance, that he is under a neceſſity to continue them in the ſame State, and could not vary it; as if his Power were exhauſted; or that if he did vary it, that it would be for the worſe; as if the Riches of his Wiſdom were at an End.

Beſides: we ſee but a very ſmall Part of the Scheme of Providence: and thoſe Events, which appear to us ſo deſtructive on particular Globes, may contribute to the Harmony of the Whole. Theſe Storms may be as neceſſary as the Calm; and ſeen from a right Point of View may afford as beautiful a Proſpect; the moſt uniform is not the moſt pleaſing; it is that which is changing, and which affords the greateſt Variety of Objects. And whether theſe Changes are effected by what we call Natural or by what we call Miraculous Means, they are equally the Work of GOD, and ſerve equally to proclaim his Power.

If ſuch Changes are poſſible (as no doubt they are) there are both Moral and Natural Reaſons to convince us, that they are every Moment going on in ſome or other of the innumerable Globes diſperſed through the Univerſe.

1. If GOD has placed on each Globe (as is more than probable) Material Beings endued with Intelligence and Free Will; theſe Changes ſerve, either to proclaim his Power and awaken them to a Senſe of their Duty, or to execute his Juſtice by puniſhing their Crimes.

2. We may be convinced of ſuch Alterations from the Appearance of our own Globe: which (beſides what we know from Hiſtory) are recorded in very viſible Characters on its Surface. Look on a Map of the Globe; how irregular is the Diſpoſition of Land and Water! Look on many Parts of the Globe itſelf; how rugged are they with barren, broken, and miſ-ſhapen Rocks, and horrid Precipices!

pices! which are next to Proofs, that the preſent Surface is but the Fragment of ſomething once more entire. And the many Marine Foſſils both Natural and Artificial found in Inland Places, are almoſt a Demonſtration they were once covered with Sea.

Nor is there occaſion for a Miracle to effect Alterations of this kind: the Natural Inſtruments are always near at hand, and under the Direction of the Almighty: and a general Shock may by their means happen, as well as thoſe Particular Ones, which frequently (I had almoſt ſaid daily) happen in ſome Part or other of the Surface of our Globe. [g] Have we not certain and recent Accounts of Cities ſwallowed up? [h] of Mountains re-

[g] LOWTHORP's Abridgment, Vol. 2. from p. 400 to 423. with Accounts of Earthquakes in 1692, in which all Sicily and Jamaica were ſhook, and Catanea, Port-Royal, &c. deſtroyed: of another at Lima in 1687, and another at Batavia in 1699.

[h] Between the 19th and 20th of September 1538, Monte Novo near Naples was thrown up by an Eruption

removed? of others ſinking and leaving Lakes

tion of Fire: Its perpendicular Height amounting to 400 Fathom, and its Circuit to above 3000 Paces. (See ADDISON's and MISSON's Travels.)—On Saturday the 17th of February 1571, at ſix in the Evening, a Piece of Land of 20 or 30 Acres on a ſudden broke looſe from the neighbouring Fields, and moved ſlowly on till Monday at Noon, for about 400 Paces, and then formed Markley Hill in Herefordſhire (ſee Cambden's Britannia and Annals of Q. Eliz.)—The Alterations on Mount Veſuvius, are well known: They are now ſearching the Ruins of Heraclea, which was ſwallowed up in its firſt Eruption in the Reign of TITUS VESPASIAN. The Elder PLINY loſt his Life by venturing too near to obſerve it. His Fate is deſcribed by his Nephew in one of his Epiſtles to TACITUS, (L. 6. Ep. 16.) and the Cataſtrophe of the Mountain itſelf is beautifully lamented by MARTIAL (L. 4. Epig. 24.) for what was before clothed with Vines was then buried in Aſhes.—The Fate of the Iſle of Iſchia is the Reverſe. Mr. ADDISON ſays, the ancient Poets call it Inarime, and lay Typhæus under it by reaſon of its Eruptions of Fire. There has been no Eruption for near 300 Years: the laſt was very terrible, and deſtroyed a whole City. At preſent there are ſcarce any Marks left of a ſubterraneous Fire; for the Earth is cold, and over-run with Graſs and Shrubs where the Rocks will ſuffer it.—The Via Appia and Via Flaminia (formerly the direct Roads to Rome) are now in ſeveral Places loſt in ſteep Aſcents and deep Fens and Valleys, that are inacceſſible. MISSON on this occaſion (Let. 21. V. 1.) makes a general Reflection on the Alterations Time makes on the Surface of the Earth. He ſays, 'Tis very certain, that by Winds, Rains, great Floods, Earthquakes, and other Accidents, Plains are ſwelled to Hills, and Hills ſunk to Valleys. The Land gains from the Sea in ſome places, and loſes in others. The Sea furniſhes the Land with Lakes, and the

Land

Lakes in their room? and [1] of new Islands raised in the Sea? and chiefly by Force of subterraneous Fires? And can those Fires want a Supply, when there is an Ether (which is the Natural Fire, and which, when by certain Agitations it is visible to us, we call Fire) is perpetually pervading every Globe in the Universe? How readily it will kindle certain Substances in the Air is evident from the Meteors seen there; as well as from (what we call) Electrical Experiments. How quick and instantaneous its Motion, how violent and irresistable its Force, appears from the Natural Lightning as well as from that Artificial Lightning which is raised and conducted by those Experiments. That there is a con-

Land renders it Islands. Rivers dry, and change their Course. Mountains become level, and the Figure of the Globe is in perpetual Variation.

[1] LOWTHORP continued by EAMES and MARTIN, V. 6. p. 203. An Island raised by subterraneous Fire near Tercera in 1720.

tinual

tinual Flux of Ether through our Globe appears more than probable by the Pointing of the Needle; and [k] by the Variation of the Needle it appears too, that that Flux of Ether is continually varying: and what a Change in our Globe ſuch a Variation may in the End produce, the Author of Nature only knows. The Ether agitated by the Sun and other great Luminaries (as by a glaſs Globe in Electrical Experiments) with its genial Warmth and Light cheriſhes and invigorates every Planet in the Univerſe: but if it ſhould be quickened in its Motion, or differently directed by him, who regulates its every Atom, it may prove fatal where it was before beneficial: it may blaſt and deſtroy all Species of Creatures on our Globe; and Vulcanos may break out in every

[k] LOWTHORP, V. 2. p. 610. In the Year 1580, the Needle pointed at London 11° 15′ to the Eaſt of the North Pole: in 1680 4° to the Weſt of it: and now about 17°.

every Quarter, as dreadful as Ætna or Veſuvius, and end in a general Conflagration.

If an Opinion of ſuch Changes is agreeable to Reaſon and Nature (as I am moſt firmly convinced that it is) it is alſo confirmed by the Voice of Scripture, as I will ſhew more fully in its place. And Men cannot too often dwell on this Subject; becauſe the more they think of it, the juſter Notions they will have of God and Religion.

1. This Opinion baniſhes that abſurd one of Neceſſity and Fate, to which ſome would ſubject the Power of the Almighty: conceiving Thoſe Words to ſignify ſomething Real; whereas they are Mere Words without Signification: not applicable to any thing exiſting in Nature, but to what exiſts only in Poetical Fiction. Or if they mean any thing, they mean only this; that all things muſt always have been, and muſt always be,

be, as they are at preſent; for no better Reaſon but becauſe they are ſo at preſent: which is blaſphemouſly ſetting Bounds to the Power and Wiſdom of GOD; and allowing him leſs Liberty of Counſel and Action than Man, who can plan out and execute his Work in different Ways, and alter it at his Pleaſure.

2. It baniſhes another unworthy Notion of GOD; that he is only the Soul of the Material World, which is his Body; and that he can no more change the Form of it, than we can that of our Body; or divert the ordinary Courſe of its Parts, than we can the Courſe of the Blood in our Veins. What is this but to ſuppoſe that Matter is Eternal, and Infinite, or that GOD himſelf is not ſo. It is hard to believe that Matter is Eternal, becauſe it exiſts only in particular Parts of Space: and that very Fact proves it is not Infinite; nor would GOD be ſo, if he exiſted only where there is Matter. But

the

the truth is; Matter is comprehended in ſome Part of Space only: but Space is infinite as GOD: in whom all things live, and move, and have their Being. And the abſurd Notion of GOD's being only the Soul of the World would leave him leſs Power over it, than Man has over his own Body; which he has the natural Power to deſtroy, and ſeparate from the Soul; which may exiſt after ſuch Separation. And ſhall we ſuppoſe that GOD wants Power to deſtroy the Material World; or that he would the leſs exiſt if there was not an Atom of it left?

3. This Opinion baniſhes that of the Epicureans, which denies a Providence, or that GOD intermeddles in the Affairs of the World. An Opinion equally Impious and Unphiloſophical. Impious, as it ſuppoſes GOD either not to be the Author of Nature; or that like an unkind Parent he abandons his Offſpring. Unphi-

philoſophical, as it ſuppoſes Motion without a Cauſe.—[1] It likewiſe baniſhes an Opinion of DESCARTES: that at the Creation GOD impreſſed on Matter a Certain Quantity of Motion, which unrenewed has continued ever ſince, and will ever continue without Increaſe or Diminution; and being diverted into different Channels ſerves all the Purpoſes of the Univerſe. If this aſcribes the Beginning of Motion to GOD, yet it gives no good Reaſon for the Continuance of it: For as Matter is inanimate, and cannot move itſelf, its natural State is Reſt. And as there muſt be ſome living Power to begin its Motion, that Power muſt ſtill continue acting to continue it; and if it ceaſed acting one Moment, the Motion itſelf would ceaſe: Whence I conclude, that the Deity has every Moment from the Creation of the Univerſe been acting with

[1] RENATI DESCARTES Principiorum Philoſophiæ Pars ſecunda, c. 36.

equal

equal Vigour in its Preſervation; and if he ceaſed ſo to do, the World itſelf would ceaſe. For a perpetual Motion muſt proceed from a perpetual Cauſe.

4. This Opinion is of uſe, not only to extirpate falſe and unworthy Notions of the Deity; but alſo to improve our Ideas of his Power, Wiſdom and Juſtice. How glorious does he appear! when we conſider him, not only rolling on every Globe in its Courſe, but at the ſame time regulating all that paſſes in any of them! and though they are innumerable, and each ſtocked with innumerable Variety of Creatures; yet that he is intimately preſent in all, and directs the moſt minute Tranſactions! that the Hairs in each are numbered, and that not a Sparrow falls to the Ground in any of them without his Knowledge and Appointment! What an inconceivable Variety of new Scenes equally beautiful and harmonious, muſt be continually ariſing

in his Preſence, when at his Pleaſure he changes the Face of theſe Globes, and cauſes them, like the Adder, to put off their old Dreſs, and appear in freſh Vigour and Beauty! How awful and how amiable does he appear, when we conſider him, making theſe Changes in Nature ſubſervient to moral Purpoſes, and employing them as the Inſtruments of temporal Rewards and Puniſhments to thoſe Claſſes of Rational Beings, that inhabit each Globe! At the ſame Inſtant that he acts in ſome as a tremendous Judge, he acts in others as an indulgent Parent. In ſome only alarming, in others correcting; in ſome deſtroying, in others rebuilding; in ſome changing only Individuals, in others entire Species; and exalting the Rational Creatures of each Globe from a Material to a Spiritual, from a Mortal to an Immortal State; transforming them into Angels;

Angels; and from thoſe Seminaries perpetually increaſing the Hoſt of Heaven.

5. This Opinion not only promotes Natural Religion; but alſo confirms the Authority of Scripture, in which the ſame things are revealed. Are not we there told of a new Heaven and a new Earth? That the Heavens ſhall wax old as doth a Garment, and as a Veſture ſhall they be changed; though the LORD is the ſame, and his Years ſhall not fail? Have we not there the Hiſtory of ſome Changes on our own Globe by the Creation and the Deluge? And have we not the Prediction of a future Change by a general Conflagration? In which Points Reaſon and Scripture mutually confirm each other.

Such Meditations are worthy of Rational Creatures; who are led by them from their reſpective Planets to viſit thoſe Parts of Nature which lie beyond their View. Though the viſible Parts of it ſufficient-

ly declare GOD's Glory, and are that Page of the huge Volume which he has laid open for their conſtant Peruſal and Reflection: and their own Planet is the particular Paſſage in that Page, which merits their more immediate Attention. They may range in Speculation to every Globe in the Univerſe; but their own Globe is the only Scene of their Actions; and by what they do there they are to approve themſelves to their Creator; who has left them free to act, but given them Rules to act by, which he has made known to them by Reaſon. Theſe Rules are either General, and concern all the Univerſe; or Local, which concern only particular Planets. To love GOD and adore him, to love their own Species and aſſiſt them, to uſe other Creatures to the Ends for which they were given, and not abuſe them, are of the firſt Sort of Rules, which GOD has preſcribed to all Rational Material Beings

through-

throughout the Univerſe; and are eternal Foundations of Religion and Morality. But the particular Form and Manner in which theſe Actions are to be performed in each Globe, muſt be as various as the Nature and Situation of the Globes themſelves, as the Rational Creatures that inhabit them, and the Objects with which ſuch Creatures are ſurrounded. Theſe external Modes of Religion and Morality which are practiſed in any particular Globe cannot be known in the reſt, but are the peculiar Concern of that Globe only. And the only Way to judge of their Propriety is, to conſider, if they are agreeable to Reaſon, if they are adapted to the Nature of Things on that Globe, and if they tend to promote the great Ends abovementioned. If they do not, they can neither be pleaſing to GOD, nor derive their Original from him.

Let us now conſider the Laws of Religion and Morality, which concern the

Preſent State of our own Planet, and the Preſent Race of Mankind.——I ſay the Preſent Race! For they no more concern any Colony of Creatures, that may have dwelt on this Globe before us, or any other, that may ſucceed us, than they concern the Inhabitants of Jupiter; or any other Planet whatſoever.

It hath pleaſed GOD to place Man on this Globe, to contemplate his Works, and by ſuch Contemplations to aſcend to him as the firſt Cauſe. Amongſt all GOD's Works it is moſt incumbent on him to ſcrutinize himſelf, and the Globe which he inhabits, to learn what he is himſelf, and in what Part of the Creation he is ſtationed; and from a Knowledge of his own Nature and Situation to arrive at the Knowledge of his Duty, both as a Citizen of the Univerſe in general, and as an Inhabitant of this Globe in particular.

As a Citizen of the Univerſe, he has a Duty in common with all Rational Beings howſoever diſperſed throughout the Whole, ariſing from their Relation to GOD; by which all are bound in their ſeveral Spheres to return their Tribute of Thanks and Adoration to the Author of their Being. This is Man's Religious Duty.

As an Inhabitant of this Globe, he has a Duty peculiar to himſelf (as all other Rational Beings within their reſpective Globes have) ariſing from his Relation to the other Creatures on the Face of it: the right Treatment of which is his Moral Duty. And this he may learn from a due Conſideration, of the Nature which GOD hath beſtowed on them, of the Order in which he hath placed them, and of the Ends for which he intended them: and if he confound neither their Nature, their Order, or their Uſe, his Actions are Good; if he does, they are Crimi-

nal. Becauſe GOD hath given him an Underſtanding to comprehend the Nature of Things, a Freedom of Will to chuſe what he will do, and a Freedom of Action to do what he chuſes. And the better to guard his Actions, GOD has given him Reaſon (or a Power of exerciſing his Underſtanding) to examine and compare Things, the better to judge of their Qualities and Relations, and of the Conſequences of his own Actions with regard to them, and to himſelf. And if a Man employs his Reaſon before he acts, he will ſeldom err in his Moral Duty; for the Nature of Things, the moſt common and neceſſary to be known, is generally very obvious and plain. But if he acts before he employs his Reaſon; if the Action is right, he will have no Merit; if it is wrong, he will judge of it when it is too late, and his Conſcience will condemn him: for Reaſon, which ſhould always be our Guide before we act,

act, will always in ſpite of us be our Judge after the Action, either to cenſure or applaud.

Why then is Mankind ſo little guided by Reaſon; that the Generality do not think before they act; and of thoſe that do, many act againſt their Judgment; that even the very Beſt do many Things amiſs; and that there is not One without Faults? The Reaſon is, that it hath pleaſed GOD (for Wiſe Purpoſes to us at preſent unknown) to implant in Man Affections and Appetites, which, as they ſtir him up to Action, often conduct him to wrong Objects, or withdraw him from thoſe which are right; the firſt of which he purſues for the obtaining of ſome preſent Advantage either of Pleaſure or Profit; and avoids the laſt for the eſcaping ſome preſent Inconvenience either of Uneaſineſs or Loſs; and both with ſuch Eagerneſs, that often he does not conſult his Reaſon before he acts; and when

when he does, he often judges wrong by not eſtimating Things according to their real Value: all which makes him commit Actions, which on more mature Conſideration he would avoid.

Such being Man's Frame and Conſtitution, it is no Wonder that he is liable to Error. And for the Truth both of the Cauſe and of the Effect we may appeal, in the firſt place to what paſſes within every Man's Conſcience; in the next to what paſſes in the World within our own Knowledge and Experience; and laſtly to the Hiſtory of all paſt Ages, which is chiefly filled with the Vices and Follies of Mankind. When we hear of Men, inſtead of worſhipping the GOD of Heaven and Earth, worſhipping Heaven and Earth as Gods; inſtead of bending the Knee to the GOD who made them, falling down to Gods that they made; inſtead of loving and aſſiſting their own Species, injuring and deſtroying them;

them; inſtead of uſing other Creatures for the Purpoſes intended, abuſing them to gratify their own Paſſions and Appetites; we are tempted almoſt to doubt if Man himſelf is a reaſonable Creature.

Since then GOD has given to Man a weak Underſtanding and ſtrong Paſſions, which he is naturally inclined to follow, if left to himſelf; can we ſuppoſe GOD would leave him to himſelf to ſink into ſo miſerable a State, and ſuffer the higher Faculties of his Soul, which are ſo capable of Improvement, to languiſh and be uſeleſs? Is it not more rational to believe, that he would furniſh him with ſome Means, to enlighten his Underſtanding, fortify his Reaſon, incline his Will, and moderate his Paſſions, that he may live in greater Happineſs and Dignity as well on this Globe, as in any future State for which he may be deſigned? And what Means more eaſy and natural can we imagine, than that GOD, who

forms

forms the Soul, and turns it as it pleaſeth his Wiſdom, ſhould inſpire ſome particular Perſons with ſuperior Talents to be Guides to the reſt of Mankind; who by laying many Things open to their View may enlighten their Underſtanding; by propoſing Rational Rules of acting, may inſtruct the Ignorant; and by ſhewing the Reaſons and Motives of ſo acting, may raiſe the Attention and work on the Inclination of Men to purſue them?

But how is Mankind to know theſe Guides, who for theſe great Ends may be ſo qualified and commiſſioned by GOD? I think there can be no better Way to diſtinguiſh them than by their Characters, their Doctrine, and by the Circumſtances attending the Promulgation of it. 1. They muſt be Wiſe and Juſt Men; who have only the Glory of GOD and Welfare of Mankind in View; without any Proſpect of worldly Power, Pleaſure or Profit to themſelves.

2. Their

2. Their Doctrine ought to be agreeable to Reaſon, ſince that is the only Standard given by GOD to Man to judge of it by. It ought to be general, and extend to all the Race of Mankind, who at preſent inhabit this Globe. It ought to acquaint them with the Being and Attributes of GOD: and that he is the Author and Preſerver of all Things. It ought alſo to acquaint Man with his own Nature, his Original, and his End; and what Relation he bears to GOD, to his own Species, and to other Creatures, and to point out to him ſome Rational Method of performing his Duty to each. 3. The Manner of promulging their Doctrine ſhould be ſuch, as to make it taken notice of at Firſt; and to continue the Memory of it on this Globe, as long as the Race of ADAM continue on it.

Let us in the next place conſider, what Doctrines now in the World anſwer theſe

theſe Characteriſticks: and which of thoſe that claim the Direction of Mankind ought to be preferred.

I throw out of the Caſe the Heathen Poets and Philoſophers: The Firſt involved their Sentiments in Fable and Fiction, which the Generality of Mankind adopted into a Syſtem of Idolatry. And though the Laſt did not believe thoſe Abſurdities with the Vulgar; and have left behind them many admirable Precepts of Morality; yet they had very imperfect Notions of the Deity; very abſurd ones of the Origin of Man; and very doubtful ones of any future State: and though they write on thoſe Topicks, they do it to propoſe rather than to eſtabliſh their Opinions; for none of them ſet up for Univerſal Guides.

If we take a View of the Religions now prevailing in the World; we ſhall find the greateſt Part of the Globe ſtill clouded with Idolatry: which from the ear-

earlieſt Ages down to the preſent remains a Monument of the Ignorance, Weakneſs, and Superſtition of Man.

The three Religions, that profeſs the Knowledge of one only true God, are the Jewiſh, the Chriſtian, and the Mahometan. I will ſpeak of the laſt firſt: becauſe barely to mention the Character of the Author, with ſome few of its Tenets, will ſhew it not to have the Characteriſticks of a true Religion. The Author was an Impoſtor, who uſed many Frauds to deceive his Followers; and by thoſe Means advanced himſelf to worldly Power and Grandeur. The Method he propoſes to propagate his Religion is by the Sword, not by Perſuaſion; by Conqueſt, not by Conviction. The Rewards he promiſes in a future State are ſenſual; ſuch as Rational Men would contemn in this Life; and which the Soul diveſted from the Body cannot enjoy in another. Add to this;

this; that the Pilgrimage to Mecca renders it a Local Religion, and impoſſible to become Univerſal: for if that, which is enjoined to All, can be performed only by a Few, it is a vain Command, and lays no Obligation on any.

The Jewiſh Religion is the Stock on which Chriſtianity is grafted, after lopping off the ſuperfluous Branches: therefore it is of equal Importance to a Chriſtian as a Jew; that it ſhould be of divine Original. It is contained in the Writings of MOSES, the Oldeſt now extant; and which muſt therefore ſtand on their own Authority and Credibility. We muſt therefore (as I ſaid before) conſider their Author, the Writings themſelves, and their Promulgation.

MOSES was educated in the Court of PHARAOH; and was inſtructed in the Wiſdom of the Egyptians, a learned and powerful Nation in that early Age; and from whence Learning ſpread itſelf into

other

other Countries. But he choſe rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of GOD, than to paſs for the Son of PHARAOH's Daughter. And was miraculouſly called by GOD to deliver his Countrymen from Slavery, and to conduct them to the Promiſed Land through the Wilderneſs; where for Forty Years he approved himſelf a moſt wiſe Legiſlator; a moſt upright Judge; and a moſt ſhining Example of Piety and Virtue.

His Writings are Philoſophical, Hiſtorical, Prophetical, Moral, Political, and Religious. And let us appeal to Reaſon, if they carry not with them the Internal Marks of a Divine Original.

In the Philoſophical Part he deſcribes the Creation of the Univerſe; the Formation of the Surface of our Globe; and the Original of Man and all other Creatures on it.

He ſets out with ſaying, "In the Be-
"ginning GOD created the Heavens and

"the Earth." A very ſhort but ſublime Sentence! of few Words; but which expreſs and imply as much good Senſe and ſound Philoſophy, as could be contained in as many Volumes. It aſſerts, what none but the Fool ever denied in his Heart, that there is a GOD: without Beginning; ſelf-exiſtent from Eternity. That all other Beings had a Beginning; and derived their Exiſtence from him. That he created them, or cauſed them to exiſt out of Nothing; not out of a pre-exiſting Chaos, which is a very Chimerical Notion. Whether we ſuppoſe it Eternal, or to have been created before the World. For if we ſuppoſe ſuch a Chaos Eternal; it is as abſurd and a more gloomy Idea than that of an Eternal World. And can we ſuppoſe ſuch a uſeleſs piece of Lumber to lye by from Eternity, till it pleaſed GOD to employ it in the Creation? Or can we ſuppoſe, that GOD, like a common Mechanick,

nick, wants Materials provided beforehand to begin his Work? And it is as unworthy of the Deity to ſuppoſe, that GOD firſt created a Chaos, and out of that a World. For can we conceive, that in the Original Production of the World he would frame it imperfect, in order to render it more perfect afterwards? and perform that at Two Operations, which he could perform at One? How much more agreeable to the Divine Majeſty and Perfection is the Senſe of the Words, "GOD created the Heavens and "the Earth!" Plainly implying, not only our Globe, but every Globe in the Univerſe; and that all Nature, with every Being comprehended in it, ſtarted at once at the Word or Nod of the Almighty into a beautiful Order and Harmony, to declare his Glory, and demonſtrate his Power and Wiſdom.

After this general and noble Deſcription of the Creation of the Univerſe, he

confines his Diſcourſe to this little Globe, the peculiar Province of Man. And what he ſays of it ſeems to me, not to relate to the Original Formation of it; but to ſome great Alteration of its Surface, immediately preceding the Donation of it to the preſent Race of Mankind. It may have undergone many Revolutions and Viciſſitudes before that time: for GOD out of the ſame Maſs of Matter, can produce Variety of Effects, equally wonderful and glorious. But what it hath been before its preſent State, or what it may be after it, GOD, who alone is able to vary the Landſcape, alone knows; and it is vain for Man to conjecture. It is of more importance for him to know, how this Habitation was prepared for him; how he was placed in it; and by what Tenure he holds it: which Particulars are diſtinctly related by MOSES.

Who-

Whoever maturely and impartially conſiders the Force of his Expreſſions relating to our Globe, I ſhould imagine would concur with me in Opinion, that they cannot relate to the Original Creation of it. He ſays, "that the Earth was "without Form." He cannot mean, that it was not a Globe; or that it was not a Planet in that Part of our Solar Syſtem in which it is ranged at preſent. Nor can he mean (for the Reaſons I have before given) that this or any other Globe, at the Creation of the Univerſe, came rude and imperfect from the Hands of the Creator. He muſt mean that the Form of its Surface was altered; that it was without the Form it had, either at the Creation, or at the time immediately preceding that State of it which he is deſcribing; that the Beauty and Harmony of its Parts were deſtroyed, and its former Figures melted and diſſolved, like Wax; in order to receive a new Stamp and

Impreſſion from the Almighty. And his next Expreſſion ſeems to confirm this Interpretation; for he ſays, "The Earth "was Void." That is, it had no Creature upon it. It was void of every thing, that ever lived or moved or grew on Land or in the Water: they were all confounded and deſtroyed. And ſeveral of the following Expreſſions point out to us the Natural Means, employed by GOD to effect this great Change. It ſeems to have been brought about by a General Deluge; more laſting and more fatal than that, which followed in the Days of NOAH. For it is ſaid, that Darkneſs was upon the Deep; that the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters, which were afterwards gathered into one Place, to let the dry Land appear. From all which it is evident, that the whole Surface of the Globe was covered with Water mixed and polluted with Earth. Nor is it wonderful, that Darkneſs ſhould be on the Deep,

when the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters. That is, when the Almighty Power put them in a violent Agitation, and thoroughly mixed them with every thing in the Caverns and on the Face of the Earth. For when the whole Globe was covered with Water, mixed with Earth, and impregnated, heated, and fermenting with all ſorts of Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral Subſtances, the Sun muſt raiſe a Vapour, ſo copious, thick, and groſs, as would make him inviſible to Creatures upon Earth, had there been any then upon it; who, being deprived of the Sun and Stars, the Index of their Time, could not have diſtinguiſhed any Part of the Twenty-four Hours from another.

But when it pleaſed GOD to abate this Agitation and Ferment, the groſſer Particles of the Vapour naturally fell back to the Earth. And then it was, that GOD ſaid, "Let there be Light, and there "was Light:" that is, the Sun ſhone a-

gain on our Globe, and might give a Senſation of Light to Animals (ſoon to be placed there) by impelling the Ether on the Eye. And the Earth, by its Rotation on its Axis, again ſeparated the Light from the Darkneſs, and Day from Night: and the Evening and the Morning were diſtinguiſhable by the Setting and Riſing of the Sun. For we are not to imagine, that Light in general was then created: and that it did not exiſt before that Period. Light has ever been: and is (with Reverence let me ſpeak it) a Property of the Deity. The Scripture tells us, GOD is Light: he dwelleth in Light: he decketh himſelf with Light as with a Garment: in him is no Darkneſs: the Darkneſs and Light to him are both alike. Thus our great, ſublime, and philoſophical Poet, addreſſing himſelf to the Light, ſays,

—*Before the Sun,*
Before the Heavens thou wert—

and endeavouring to convey to our weak

weak Underſtanding ſome Idea, tho' imperfect, of its Nature, he calls it,

Of the Eternal Co-eternal Beam:
Bright Effluence of bright Eſſence increate [a].

After the groſſer Parts of this thick Vapour had fallen back on the Globe, the lighter watery Particles remained ſuſpended in the Air; which divided them from the Waters on the Face of the Globe; and which MOSES, to comply with the Vulgar Phraſe and Apprehenſion, calls the Firmament and the Heaven.

When the Agitation of the Waters ceaſed; the Waters under the Heavens, that is, on the Surface of the Globe, would naturally ſubſide, or be gathered together, or run into ſuch Cavities as GOD had provided for them; and the dry Land muſt of courſe appear; and by ſo tho-

[a] MILTON, Par Loſt, Book III.

rough

rough a Mixture of Manure of all Sorts muſt be very well prepared to nouriſh all kinds of Vegetables, the Graſs, the Herb yielding Seed, and the Fruit-tree yielding Fruit; which GOD was then pleaſed to plant upon it.

When the Air grew clear and ſerene, the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars became viſible; which MOSES places in the Firmament of the Heaven; to make himſelf intelligible to the Vulgar; who call every thing Heaven, that appears in the Air over their Heads, and cannot diſtinguiſh the Diſtance of the Clouds from the Heavenly Bodies, nor of one Celeſtial Globe from another. He does but juſt mention the Stars, (which compoſe ſo vaſt a Part of the Univerſe) becauſe it was foreign and unneceſſary to his Subject. And he mentions the Sun and Moon, only as they have a Relation to our Globe, and not to the reſt of our Planetary Syſtem. He ſpeaks of them according

according to the Conceptions of the Vulgar: he calls the Moon a Light as well as the Sun; the laſt the greater to rule the Day, and the other to rule the Night; and to be for Signs, for Seaſons, for Days, and Years; that is, to diſtinguiſh to us the neceſſary Diviſions and Memorials of our Time.

Aſtewards: when both Water and Air were ſettled, and clear, and fit to receive their Inhabitants; then GOD created every thing living and moving, which the Waters brought forth in abundance according to their kind; and every feathered Fowl according to his kind.

Laſtly: when the Earth was become firm; and was clad with Vegetables; GOD made all Sorts of terreſtrial Animals; to whom he gave them for Food: and laſt of all the nobleſt of them all, Man, to whom he gave Dominion over all the reſt.

Thus,

Thus, MOSES ſays, "the Heavens and "the Earth were finiſhed, and all the "Hoſt of them:" that is, all Creatures in the Air, the Waters, and the Earth. And to this Performance he aſſigns Six Days. This Account of the Work, and of its Duration, if applied to ſuch an Alteration of the Surface of our Globe only, may (from the firſt Appearance of the Light) bear even a literal Interpretation. But if it be applied to the Creation of the Univerſe in the manner there deſcribed, it is contrary to Reaſon and to Fact, and derogates from the Wiſdom and Dignity of the Creator.

For it repreſents GOD, working Six Days, to produce and form all things; which, it is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, were perfected in an Inſtant by his Will. It repreſents the Frame of the World in ſeveral Particulars different from what it really is: for it ſuppoſes with the Vulgar our little Planet (without mentioning

ing the others) to be the principal Part of the Creation; and the Sun, Moon, and Stars, (all indiſcriminately mentioned as Luminaries) as ſubſervient to that alone. It mentions the Creation of Light, which (as I ſaid before) muſt have been from Eternity. It mentions Waters above the Firmament. Which as well as the Firmament are no where to be found, unleſs you underſtand the Waters to be the Clouds or Exhalations; and the Firmament the Air that ſupports them. It repreſents the Six Days Work, as divided into very unequal and unnatural Taſks or Portions. On the Firſt Day was created Heaven; and Earth ſhapeleſs, void, and dark; and Light. On the Second, the Firmament, dividing the Waters beneath it from thoſe above. On the Third, the Sea, Land, and Vegetables. On the Fourth, the Sun, Moon, and Stars. On the Fifth, Fiſh, and Fowl. On the Sixth, all terreſtrial Animals, and Man.

Such

Such an Interpretation can never be adopted; and tho' that, which I have before given, may perhaps be New, it appears to me the moſt Rational. It makes MOSES ſpeak a Language, intelligible at the ſame time, both to the Vulgar, and to the Philoſopher. Whereas a literal Interpretation is full of Abſurdities. And whoever puts ſuch a Conſtruction on any Part of Scripture, does not ſupport, but undermines its Authority; contributes to makes Infidels and not Believers. And ſince Men have now clearer Conceptions of the Structure of the Univerſe; ſince the Ptolemaic Syſtem has given place to the Copernican; and Fiction to Reality; it is right to employ the Lights which GOD has afforded them, to illuſtrate his Works; and they are more capable now to explain the Moſaical Account of the Creation, than they were in darker and more ignorant Ages.

In

In the laſt place, MOSES gives an Account of the Original of the Preſent Race of Mankind: whom he derives from One Pair only. And in the Deſcription of their Formation, Nature, State, and Situation, he ſhadows Truth, under Allegory and Fiction, to make it the more agreeable. He ſays, GOD formed Man, in his own Image, after his own Likeneſs; out of the Duſt of the Ground: and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life. The Meaning is, that he created him with a Spiritual and Immortal Soul, but with a Material and Earthly Body. He ſays, GOD made Woman out of his Rib: meaning by ſuch a Repreſentation to inſpire mutual and cordial Affection between them, as being of one Nature, and to inculcate the Dependance of the Woman on the Man. He ſays, GOD put them into Eden, i. e. placed them in a State of Happineſs; till the Woman (the weaker in Underſtanding)

was

was tempted by the Serpent, i. e. her own vicious Inclinations, to eat the forbidden Fruit, i. e. to commit Sin, and to tempt the Man to do the ſame; for which they were turned out of Paradiſe, i. e. loſt their Happineſs with their Innocence. For Innocent they were, and muſt have been, at the Inſtant of their Creation, not having had time to commit Sin; and conſequently muſt have been as happy, as a clear Conſcience, and the Health and Vigour both of Body and Mind, which GOD then beſtowed on them, could make them. And how they were driven out of this Paradiſe by Sin, let every Guilty Man's Conſcience inform him.

How natural and juſt is ſuch an Allegorical Interpretation! But to imagine the Account to be a literal Hiſtory is, I think, inconſiſtent with Reaſon, and any true or pure Conception of the Deity. To conceive, that GOD formed Man mechanically

chanically from the Duſt, and breathed in his Face; that he took a Rib from the Man when aſleep to form the Woman; that he planted a particular Garden for them to reſide in, excluſive of the reſt of the Globe, which was to remain uninhabited; that in the Garden, there was one Tree whoſe Fruit could give Knowledge, and another whoſe Fruit could give Life; that the Serpent ſpoke to the Woman; that the eating of one Fruit could make Man ſinful and mortal, or of another immortal; that GOD made Coats for them; that he drove them out of the Garden; and that he placed Cherubims with flaming Swords to guard the Tree of Life; are ſuch Opinions as ſeem to me to require no Confutation.

As Man at his Creation muſt have been placed on ſome one particular Spot of this Globe; and could only have the ſpontaneous Product of it for his Nutri-

ment; GOD placed him in a Climate, where he made to grow out of the Ground every Tree pleaſant to the Sight, and good for Meats. This Place was a real Eden or Garden: and the firſt Pair alone, Strangers to Sin and Shame, a while enjoyed a perfect Paradiſe. MOSES deſcribes the Situation of this Place by the names of Rivers and Countries known in his Time. Which Deſcription leads many to imagine it to have been near Babylon; and the four Rivers to be the Tigris and Euphrates before they unite, and the two Branches into which they divide before they fall into the Perſian Gulf. And certainly there is no properer Place to be found on the preſent Surface of the Globe; the Country being fruitful, and near the Center of the great Continent of Aſia, Africa, and Europe.

Some have ſuppoſed, that before NOAH's Flood, there was a regular Diſpoſition of Land and Water on the Surface of

this

this Globe: but that the Shell of it, being broken by that Event, preſents us with the ſeveral Irregularities now to be obſerved in the Map of it. I can not ſubſcribe to that Opinion; which is ſcarce reconcileable to the Account of MOSES; who mentions Mountains before the Flood, and the ſame Situation of Rivers before and ſince: and ſays, the Dove returned to the Ark with a Leaf pluckt from an Olive; which ſhews, that the Waters, tho' deep, were ſtill, and could not occaſion ſuch a Change. I imagine, it is owing to earlier Cauſes; and perhaps not to one but to many; and I conceive the Great Deluge immediately before the Creation of ADAM, when the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters, to have had a principal Share in it.

It is next to be conſidered, if it is poſſible and probable, that the Globe could be peopled from one Pair. For if

it could; it ſeems a noble Deſign of Providence to abate the Pride and Ambition, and to promote the Charity and Benevolence of Men, by affording them this Subject of Reflection, that however diſtant others may be in Condition or Situation, however different in Cuſtom or Complexion, they are ſtill their Brethren, and derived from one common Maſs. And when Man came freſh (as I may ſay) out of the Mint, in perfect Vigor of Body and Mind, without Diſeaſes derived from his Parents or contracted by Intemperance, and living on the Fruits of the Earth; no wonder, that he lived longer than Men do now; and begat Sons and Daughters to the great Age which MOSES aſcribes to him. Thus we ſee Natural Cauſes concurring with the Deſigns of Providence for the more ſpeedy peopling of the Globe. And whoever computes the Numbers, that might deſcend from one Pair and their Poſterity,

Poſterity, in the Space of * above ſixteen Centuries between the Creation and the Deluge, I believe will find, that the Globe muſt have been better peopled at the time of the Deluge, than it has been at any time ſince. And as Individuals attaining to ſuch Ages muſt have a Degree of Knowledge and Experience beyond our Comprehenſion; and by the help of one Language might maintain a moſt extenſive Correſpondence; all Arts and Sciences, as well as Commerce and Navigation, muſt have been carried to great Perfection: nor could NOAH, when ſix hundred Years old, want Skill to build the great Floating Veſſel which ſaved the Remnant of Mankind.

The Dimenſions of the Ark, as given by MOSES, is eſteemed one Proof of the divine Authority of his Writings; ſince

* The Biſhop of MEAUX (in his Diſcourſe ſur l'Hiſtoire Univerſelle) makes it 1656.—Mr. WHISTON (in his Chronological Tables differing from other Writers) only 1307.

a Veſſel of that Form and Capacity is found by the Examination of the beſt Mathematicians, not only to be well contrived, but of an ample Size, to hold NOAH and his Family, each Species of Birds, Quadrupeds and creeping Things, with Proviſions for their Subſiſtence for a longer time than the Waters covered the Earth. But to collect each Species together, and to cauſe them to enter into the Ark, are things that exceed human Power, and require the Interpoſition of Providence. So likewiſe, tho' I can conceive there may be Water enough in the Clouds, the Ocean, and the great Deep, to cover the Globe; yet I cannot conceive how it could be raiſed out of the Ocean and the Deep above the Mountains, without a like Interpoſition of Providence. It is certain, that GOD can, tho' he ſeldom does, act out of the common Courſe of Nature: whenever he does, it is for great

great and wiſe Ends, and in Affairs of general Concern: Now what more momentous Occaſion can we imagine on our Globe, than the Deſtruction of Mankind for their Wickedneſs, all to a few Perſons, who and their Poſterity were warned by ſo terrible an Event, to be more virtuous, and to revere GOD's Power and Juſtice.

After the Flood, Man was permitted to feed on Animals; and Luxury and Intemperance, as well as divine Appointment, might have ſome Share in abridging the Term of his Life. And as Providence was viſible in the long Lives of the Poſterity of ADAM, for the more ſpeedy peopling of the Globe; it is no leſs viſible in the ſhorter Lives of the Poſterity of NOAH, that it might not be over-peopled. In the former Period, for the firſt Eight or Nine Hundred Years, there were continual Births with-

out Burials; whereas in our Age the firſt do but little exceed the laſt.

Another Inſtance of Providence MOSES gives us is, the Confuſion of Tongues: which, tho' miraculous, is not more ſo than the beſtowing the Uſe of Language on Man immediately on his Creation. This Difference of Language compelled Mankind to divide into Clans, and to ſettle in different Places; and by diſperſing them naturally contributed to the peopling of the Earth.

As MOSES derives Man and all terreſtrial Animals from the Ark; it is found difficult to account, how ſome of them arrived from Mount Ararat to the Places where they have been ſince found. How came the People into America, which COLUMBUS found there? Or, ſeveral Species of Animals, not to be met with in our Hemiſphere? How came into Iſlands venomous and fierce Creatures, which Men would rather avoid, than

than convey to ſuch Abodes? Or, how came the Negroes to differ ſo much in Complexion from other Men, if deſcended from the ſame Parents? Theſe Queſtions are beſt anſwered by others. Does not North America join to our Continent? Is it a longer Voyage from ſome Part of the African Coaſt to Braſil, than it is from London to the Mediterranean? Were not the Coaſts of Aſia early peopled? And are not the Inhabitants of them to be ſuppoſed to be ſoon acquainted with the Art of Navigation? What do we know of their Hiſtory? Are we informed of all the Voyages they have made? Or, can we aſſert, that None have been made from Aſia or Africa to America from the Flood to the Days of COLUMBUS? Can we ſay, there has been no Alteration in the Surface of the Globe in ſo long a Space of Time by ſubterraneous Eruptions and other Accidents? And that many

many Iſlands have not been broken by them from the Continent? Does not the Climate vary Men's Complexions? Was a fair Man ever known a Native of Guinea? or a Negroe of the Polar Circle? Let me aſk too ſome other Queſtions, Was there a Deluge, or was there not? And if there was, was it total? If there was not a Deluge, or if it was not total, how come [f] Marine Foſſils to be found in Inland Parts all over the Globe? And if there was a total Deluge, how could any terreſtrial Animals eſcape, but by ſome ſuch Means as MOSES deſcribes?

So much for the Philoſophy of MOSES. I ſhall now conſider him as an Hiſtorian; the Firſt and the only one, who gives any Account of above Twenty-five Centuries,

[f] In Ab. of Phil. Tran. Vol. IV. Part 2. Pag. 270. by JONES, it is ſaid; She-ſhells and the Teeth and Bones of Marine Animals occur almoſt every where and in all Countries; and have been ſhewn to be all Remains of the Univerſal Deluge.

Centuries, which paſſed from ADAM to his own Time. In this Account he comprehends the Creation (or rather Renovation of the Face of our Globe) and the Deluge: two moſt memorable Events, and moſt neceſſary to be known to the preſent Race of Mankind. He gives but few Particulars of what paſſed in above Sixteen Centuries between the Creation and the Deluge; but informs us in general, that that Calamity was brought on the Antediluvians for their Wickedneſs. Nor was it at all neceſſary to be minute in relating the Affairs of a Race of Men long ſince extinct, and whoſe Memorial (but for his Hiſtory) muſt have periſhed with them. He has ſet forth a Pedigree from ADAM to MOSES, with that Plainneſs and Simplicity, as well as Perſpicuity and Preciſion, as gives great Credit to his Hiſtory; and leaves little or no Room to doubt of its Veracity. The ſame may be ſaid of ſeveral Pedigrees, which

which he derives from NOAH, to ABRAHAM the Father of the Faithful, and to ſeveral others, who were Founders of neighbouring Nations.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that MOSES ſhould have clear Information of the earlieſt Ages; when we conſider the long Life of Man before the Flood. NOAH (if I miſtake not) was cotemporary with SETH and with ABRAHAM: and might inform ABRAHAM of his being ſaved from the Deluge himſelf, and of what he had heard from the Son of ADAM concerning the Creation. Events too intereſting, for ABRAHAM not to tranſmit to his Poſterity, or for MOSES not to learn from his great Anceſtor: for ABRAHAM was Great Grand-father to LEVI; as LEVI was to MOSES.

As MOSES is the moſt ancient Writer, his Hiſtory can receive no Confirmation from the concurrent Teſtimony of Authors near his own Time. Yet it is

is much confirmed by the Traditions, which have prevailed amongſt moſt ancient Nations concerning a Chaos, out of which the Earth was formed, and a General Deluge: which Poets have confounded, and obſcured, with many Fables of their own Invention.

But the ſtrongeſt Evidence of the Truth of the Hiſtory of MOSES are the People of the Jews themſelves. Who, when it was publiſhed, muſt know almoſt every Circumſtance of it, that related to their own Nation. Who were Eye-witneſſes to what paſſed in Egypt and the Wilderneſs. Who were in Fact ſettled under his Inſtitutions in the Land of Canaan; where they were found in After-Ages governed by them. Who, before CHRIST, were puniſhed by GOD for forſaking of them: and who ſince have been puniſhed by Man for adhering to them. And who in the midſt of Perſecution do ſtill firmly adhere to them,

above

above 3000 Years after their Publication. As if GOD intended they ſhould always remain a living Evidence of the Truth of his Word delivered to the World by this his firſt great Prophet, in which Character I ſhall now conſider him.

By Prophets I would be underſtood to mean Perſons choſen and inſpired by GOD to publiſh his Decrees to Mankind; to manifeſt his Wiſdom by their Precepts, his Power by their Miracles, and his Preſcience by their Predictions.

The Predictions to be found in the Writings of MOSES are what I meant by the Prophetical Part of them: and are ſuch as were made known by GOD to him, or to Others who lived before him, and concern either Mankind in general, or the Jews in particular.

The firſt Prediction, that concerns Mankind in general, is contained in the Allegorical Account of the Fall: *viz.* that the Seed of the Serpent ſhould bruiſe

bruiſe the Heel of the Woman, and her Seed the Serpent's Head. As all the Allegory is full of important Truths, we cannot ſuppoſe this Part to be without its Meaning. I take the Meaning to be, that tho' the Race of ADAM will always be purſued, attacked, and diſturbed, by the Temptations of their own vicious Inclinations to commit Sin; yet GOD will raiſe up among them Prophets, who ſhall furniſh them with divine Means to vanquiſh ſuch Temptations. And therefore the Learned with Juſtice principally apply this Prediction to CHRIST: whom his Followers allow to be a Prophet, and more than a Prophet, ſent into the World to ſave Mankind.

Another Prediction of general Concern to Man is GOD's Promiſe to ABRAHAM, confirmed to ISAAC and JACOB, that in their Seed all the Nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed. This Prediction confirms the former; and at the ſame time

time informs them where to look for their Prophets, and that Salvation is only to be expected from Iſrael: but not from any Prophet before the time of DAVID: becauſe GOD honoured him with a Promiſe, that the great Prophet and King of Mankind ſhould deſcend from him. From this Quarter the Jews have always expected their MESSIAH, in whom all Nations were to be bleſſed, according to GOD's Promiſe to their Forefather ABRAHAM; and ſuch a one they ſtill expect. Though the Followers of CHRIST aſſert, that the Prophecy was compleated by his Appearance on Earth: and that he is that Promiſed Redeemer. As we hope to prove in its proper Place.

I ſhall take Notice but of Two Predictions in the Writings of MOSES relating to the Jews in particular.

The Firſt is GOD's Promiſe to ABRAHAM; that he would give the Land of Canaan to his Poſterity, and make of them

them there a mighty Nation. This was [g] above 450 Years before MOSES conducted them to the Borders of that Land; which they took Poſſeſſion of ſoon after his Death; and grew up there under the Conduct of their Judges; till they arrived at very great Power in the Reigns of DAVID and SOLOMON.

The Second is the Promiſe of temporal Bleſſings to them, whilſt they worſhipped the true GOD, and kept his Commandments; and of temporal Judgments, whenever they fell to Idolatry; a Prophecy verified by the whole Series of their Hiſtory [h] for near 1500 Years from MOSES to CHRIST.

As to the Moral Part of the Writings of MOSES, it is ſet forth in the Decalogue, which teaches us to acknowledge One only true GOD; to revere his Name;

[g] Both the Biſhop of MEAUX and WHISTON make it about 470.

[h] Both the Biſhop and WHISTON make it above 1490.

and to adore him: to honour all Men, to injure no Man, in Perſon or in Property, either by Deed, Word, or Thought; a ſet of Precepts ſo ſhort, that All may remember; ſo clear, that None can miſtake; ſo excellent, that All muſt approve: worthy to be written by the Finger of GOD, and engraven on the Heart of Man: and which muſt remain an immutable Law as long as he inhabits this Globe.

The Political Part of the Writings of MOSES contains the Laws for the Civil Government of the Jews; which are a never-failing Proof of the Wiſdom of the Legiſlator. In all Nations the principal Duties of Morality have been guarded with Penalties to puniſh the Breach of them. Theſe Penalties are well adapted by the Moſaical Law to the Nature of the Offence. To inſtance firſt in the Offences againſt the Decalogue. Idolatry, Blaſphemy, Sabbath-breaking,

Striking

Striking or Curſing of Parents, Murder, and Adultery, are puniſhed with Death. Theft with five-fold Retribution. Falſe Evidence with the Payment of the full Damage it might occaſion. Inferior Hurts to the Perſon with Retaliation: an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth: and if done to a Bond Servant, to be recompenced with Freedom. The Treſpaſſer on Lands was to make Reſtitution out of the beſt Product of his own. Unnatural Pollutions are capitally puniſhed. Inceſtuous are prohibited. Marriages with Strangers are prohibited for fear of Idolatry. Children accuſed of Vice by their Parents to the Magiſtrate were to ſuffer Death. If a betrothed Virgin was known in the City, both ſhe and the Man were to die: if in the Field, the Man only. If the Virgin was not betrothed, the Man was to pay a Ranſom to her Parents, and to take her and never to put her away. The He-

brew Servant after ſix Years was to be free. They were to riſe up to the hoary Head. Not to vex the Stranger. To help the Fatherleſs and Widow. To keep and reſtore Things loſt or ſtray'd to the Owner. To eaſe the Aſs of their Enemy ſinking under his Burthen. To leave the Gleanings of their Harveſt and Vineyard to the Poor: to open the Hand wide to him. Not to oppreſs the hired Servant; but to pay him before the going down of the Sun. Not to lend upon Uſury or Pledge. Not to remove the Neighbour's Land-mark. Not to keep a great and a ſmall, but one juſt Weight and Meaſure. Judges were not to take a Gift to blind them: nor to wreſt their Judgment in the Cauſe of the Poor or of the Mighty: were to have the Matter proved by two or more Witneſſes: And in corporal Puniſhments were not to order above Forty Stripes.—And to crown all, every one was to love his Neighbour

as

as himſelf. Theſe, with many other of the Laws of MOSES (too numerous to be here inſerted) compoſe a more excellent Syſtem of human Policy than any that either before or ſince hath appeared in the World; and the good Effects of them were manifeſt through many Ages by Experience: for the Jews (except during their Captivity) lived under them from the time of MOSES to the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem; a much longer Period than the Spartans continued under the Laws of LYCURGUS.

In the Religious Part of the Moſaical Writings is to be found a general Hiſtory of Religion from ADAM to MOSES; and the general Scheme of Providence for the preſerving the Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God on Earth, as long as the Poſterity of ADAM ſhall remain upon it: ſhewing how by Man's natural Depravity it was gradually contracted, and confined to the Seed of ABRAHAM;

and foretelling, that from them it ſhould at laſt be ſpread over the Face of the Earth.

From ADAM to NOAH Man was guided by his own Reaſon, joined to ſuch Traditions as he received from ADAM concerning GOD and the Creation; which proved too weak a Defence againſt his own vicious Inclinations.

Though the Terrors of the Deluge were added to the former Motives to a good Life, yet they all proved inſufficient; and NOAH was ſcarce dead, before a ſecond Deluge of Impiety ſpread itſelf amongſt Men. Which made the Almighty chuſe ABRAHAM, and ſet a carnal Seal on him and his Poſterity, as Perſons deſigned by him, to preſerve the Honour of his Name and Worſhip, and to puniſh the Idolatry of other Nations: which was become very general, when the Children of Iſrael left Egypt: and ſuch is the Force of Cuſtom on Vulgar Minds; that even they

they were ſeduced; and prevailed on AARON to conſent to making the Golden Calf in the Wilderneſs.

The better to ſecure Man againſt this Infatuation, and to preſerve Natural Religion pure and undefiled, it now pleaſed GOD to aſſiſt his Reaſon by a written Law, delivered to MOSES, to remain to all Generations. Written by GOD on Tables of Stone; and delivered to MOSES with the moſt awful and tremendous Signs of Divine Power in the Sight of all the People; to be kept (as it deſerved) in the Ark of the Covenant, in the moſt ſacred Place of the Tabernacle and Temple, between the Cherubims, and honoured with viſible Marks of the Divine Preſence and Protection.

To worſhip GOD is a Part of Natural Religion, injoined by this Law. But as Men cannot join in Publick Worſhip without obſerving ſome outward Form, it is neceſſary to eſtabliſh ſome Form for the

Uſe of the People. The Form eſtabliſhed by Moses was full of Pomp and Ceremony: intended partly, that the People might not think it meaner than the Worſhip of the idolatrous Nations round about them; but principally, to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe Nations. For there was ſcarce a Ceremony or Obſervance, but what was ordained to perpetuate the Memory of ſome ſignal Mercy or Deliverance, which they had received either in Egypt or the Wilderneſs; and which perhaps was to be a Type to Mankind of ſome greater Mercy or Deliverance to come. But theſe Ceremonies, conſidered in themſelves alone, were vain; were burthenſome in the Performance: ſome were temporary: others were local, as the coming annually to the Tabernacle or Temple to worſhip. Which Ceremonies, though neceſſary to keep the Jews united among themſelves, and a diſtinct People from others for a Time,

are

are abſolutely incompatible with a Religion that muſt be general to all Mankind. And MOSES himſelf declares it a Form, that is to give place to a better; where he ſays, "A Prophet ſhall the LORD raiſe "up unto you, like unto me, from "among you, even of thy Brethren; "unto him ſhall ye hearken. And GOD "will put his Words in his Mouth; and "he ſhall ſpeak all that he commands "him: and whoſoever will not hearken "to the Words, which he ſhall ſpeak "in GOD's Name, GOD will require it "of him."

Such are the Writings of MOSES.—Which not only bear in themſelves the Marks of a Divine Original: but are proved to be ſo by the Miracles attending their Promulgation; and by the Accompliſhment of many Prophecies contained in them; which are a ſtrong Aſſurance that the reſt will be accompliſhed.

When

When MOSES was called by GOD; his Commiſſion was atteſted by Fire in the Buſh unconſumed, and by a Voice from Heaven; and a Rod was delivered to him, as the Enſign of his Power, by which he performed moſt amazing Wonders, in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Wilderneſs. And when the Commandments were delivered to him on Mount Sinai, there were Thunders, and Lightnings, and the Sound of the Trumpet exceeding loud: and all the People was afraid: and when they ſtood round the nether part of the Mount, it was all on Smoke, becauſe the Lord came down upon it in Fire; and all the Mount trembled exceedingly. And when the Sound of the Trumpet blew long, and waxed louder and louder, MOSES ſpake, and the LORD anſwered him by Voice.

Though all theſe things are very wonderful, yet are they inconteſtable. There is ſcarce a Miracle wrought by the Hand

of

of MOSES without a Million of Witneſſes. All Egypt ſaw and felt thoſe performed there; as did all the Congregation of ISRAEL thoſe in the Wilderneſs. If the People had not ſeen them, MOSES could never have related them to that very People, as things which they had ſeen: and if the People aſſembled had ſeen them, they could not afterwards deny them. He daily reminds them of theſe Miracles; appeals to them as Facts, which they had ſeen and could not deny, and which were worthy to be had in remembrance. As ſuch they are beautifully deſcribed by the ſacred Writers; and have been juſtly celebrated through all Ages.

Another Proof of the Divine Original of the Writings of MOSES is the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies contained in them. By that we are to judge if the LORD hath ſpoken it; for he declareth by MOSES, that if a Prophet

ſpeak

ſpeak in his Name, and the thing come not to paſs, the Prophet hath ſpoken preſumptuouſly.

I have before taken notice, that the Prophecies of MOSES relating to the Settlement of the Children of ISRAEL in Canaan, and to their Happineſs or Miſery as they were obedient or diſobedient to the Law, have been accompliſhed.

There remains behind the great and important Prophecy concerning the MESSIAH; of the Seed of the Woman, who is to bruiſe the Serpent's Head; of the Seed of ABRAHAM, in whom all Nations are to be bleſſed; like unto MOSES, whom they are to hear; who is to ſpeak to them all that GOD commands; and to whoſe Words if they do not hearken, GOD will require it of them. Let us then conſider, if ſuch a Prophet has yet appeared; and if he has, how far the

Ends

Ends of his Miſſion have been accompliſhed.

The Author, who added the laſt Chapter of Deuteronomy to the Writings of MOSES, which gives an account of his Death and Character, ſays, "that there "aroſe not a Prophet ſince in ISRAEL "like unto him, whom the LORD knew "Face to Face; in all the Miracles and "Wonders which he ſent him to do in "the Land of Egypt; and in all that "mighty Hand, and all that great Fear, "which he wrought in the ſight of all "ISRAEL." This is ſuppoſed to be added by EZRA after the Return from the Captivity. Before the time of EZRA, SAMUEL, DAVID, ELIJA, ELISHA, and almoſt all the Prophets whoſe Writings are contained in the Bible, had appeared. Conſequently none of them could be the MESSIAH: and far from claiming the Character, thoſe ſacred Writers, as well as MOSES, foretell his Coming. From

the

the time of MALACHI after the Captivity there appeared no Prophet till JOHN the Baptiſt; who expreſly declares he was not that Prophet, and not worthy to unlooſe the Latchet of his Shoe; but that he was near at hand; meaning JESUS of Nazareth, the only Perſon, who ever till that time claimed the Title.

Let us firſt examine what external Circumſtances there are to ſupport this Claim: and then, whether it is ſupported by his Life and Doctrine.

But before I enter on this Subject, let me premiſe once for all, that I underſtand every thing ſaid in Scripture concerning JESUS CHRIST to relate to this Globe only. That GOD has ordained him the Guide, the Prophet, the Judge, the Prince, the Saviour, and the Redeemer of the Race of ADAM only: that as Man he ſuffered only for Men, and on Earth for Sins only committed on Earth; that GOD hath united him to himſelf

himſelf in a peculiar manner for thoſe purpoſes; as he may have done other intelligent Beings in other Planets for ſimilar Ends. That the Son of DAVID has not, nor ever will have, more Authority there, than they have or can have here. And we may as well expect a Saviour or Prophet from Mercury or Jupiter, as they One from hence.

This is, and ought always to be thought the genuine Interpretation of Scripture: and we ſhould not draw any other Concluſions from any general Expreſſions found there: for to make it contradict Nature is to deſtroy its Authority; and to cauſe that, which rightly underſtood is moſt rational, to be moſt abſurd and incredible.

That there was ſuch a Perſon as JESUS of Nazareth can no more be doubted, than that there was ſuch a Prince as AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, in whoſe Reign he was born. His Life is proved, by the

Writings

Writings of his own Diſciples, who were Eye-witneſſes to the Particulars of it which they have related: by the concurrent Teſtimony of other Authors both Jewiſh and Pagan: by the Admiſſion and Confeſſion of even the moſt inveterate Enemies to Chriſtianity: and by the number of Chriſtians, who have ever ſince profeſſed this Religion, which could not have been at firſt taught and eſtabliſhed without ſome real Author of it.

The Life of JESUS was not (like that of MOSES) writ by himſelf, but by others. The Four Evangeliſts are his Biographers; and there are the ſtrongeſt Reaſons to convince us of the Truth of their Relation; and that it is come down to us without any material Alterations.

1. Two of the Evangeliſts were his Diſciples and Apoſtles, and Eye-witneſſes of the Facts they relate. A Third was a Companion of St. PETER, who was ſo: and the Fourth of St. PAUL, who

who had been miraculouſly converted and inſtructed. Their Accounts, tho' publiſhed in diſtant Places and different Periods of Time, all agree in the principal Facts: and yet evidently appear not to be copied from each other, becauſe each in ſome Inſtances ſupply Circumſtances omitted by the reſt. The Writings of the other Apoſtles in the New Teſtament bear witneſs of their Truth: as cotemporary Jewiſh and Pagan Authors do to the Truth of thoſe Facts, which in their Nature are of public Notoriety, and which could not eſcape their Notice, if true. The Apoſtles, while on Earth, ſpent their whole Lives in convincing the reſt of Mankind of the Truth of it. They diſperſed themſelves over great part of the Globe to propagate the Story; in which, how diſtantly ſoever diſperſed, they all continued to agree. They told it in Languages they had never learned; they confirmed it by Miracles, which

none elſe could perform; and tho' moſt of them Men of mean Fortune and Education courageouſly aſſerted the Truth of it before the Rulers of the Earth; and voluntarily expoſed themſelves to Perſecution and to Death to ſupport the Credit of it. Is it poſſible to conceive, that Men generally ſo illiterate and low ſhould invent ſuch a Story, and be at ſuch Labour and Pains, and perſiſt ſo obſtinately to impoſe it on Mankind, without any View of worldly Advantage to themſelves, but even to their own Deſtruction? or that whole Armies of Martyrs in or near their Times, who had recent Evidence of what had paſſed, ſhould ſeal it with their Blood?

2. As the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles were careful to preſerve the Memory of the Life and Actions of their LORD and MASTER in their Writings; their Followers were no leſs careful to preſerve thoſe Writings. As ſoon as the Goſpels were publiſhed,

publiſhed, they carried Copies of them to the Churches then eſtabliſhed; where the Perſons converted by the Apoſtles found them to agree with the Traditions before delivered to them. Such Copies were kept with great Care: and in what diſtant and different Parts ſoever they have been ſince found, they have been found to agree with each other, and with the Quotations made from them by the Fathers and other ancient Writers of the Church. And whatever little Variations may have crept in by the Error of Tranſcribers or Tranſlators, or have been attempted by the blind Zeal of late Ages, no Writing of Antiquity is come down purer to us than the Goſpel, nor has any ſo many Proofs of being Genuine and Authentick.

This being premiſed; let us examine whether the Character of JESUS, as ſet forth in the Goſpel, anſwers to that of the promiſed MESSIAH.

The MESSIAH was to be of the Houſe of DAVID: JESUS in the Pedigrees ſet forth by St. MATTHEW and St. LUKE is derived from that Prince and his Houſe.

The MESSIAH was to be born of a Virgin: JESUS is related to have been ſo. This is a Miracle; that is, an Event out of the common courſe of Nature. Nor are Miracles to be wondered at on ſo important and ſolemn an Occaſion: and that it pleaſed GOD to point out to Mankind their Head and their Guide by peculiar Marks of Diſtinction to notify his Arrival amongſt them.

Many other Prophecies there are concerning the MESSIAH, which the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles (who were beſt acquainted with them) ſay were fulfilled in JESUS. Such was his very Name: the Place of his Birth: the Maſſacre of the Children in Bethlehem: his Return out of Egypt: his Reſidence at Nazareth: the Preaching of JOHN in the Wilderneſs:

neſs: his leaving Nazareth to dwell at Capernaum: his riding into Jeruſalem on an Aſs with her Fole: the caſting out thoſe who bought and ſold in the Temple: his being ſold for thirty Pieces of Silver, which bought the Potters Field: the parting of his Garment, and caſting lots on his Veſture: his being crucified between Thieves, and numbered with Tranſgreſſors: the giving him Gall to eat and Vinegar to drink: the not breaking his Bones: the piercing his Side: and his not ſeeing Corruption in the Grave.

And GOD was pleaſed ſtill more manifeſtly to declare his Appearance on Earth by Miracles. An Angel foretold it to the Virgin. Angels notified it to the Shepherds. A Star (i. e. Meteor) conducted the Wiſe Men to the Place of it. Voices from Heaven proclaimed him the Son of GOD and a Prophet, at his Baptiſm, at his Transfiguration, and at his Appearance to St. PAUL. Unnatural Darkneſs co-

vered the Earth at his Death. And a great Earthquake rent the Veil of the Temple. He faſted forty Days. He walked on the Sea. Was transfigured before ſome of his Diſciples. Was ſeen by them and five hundred others at once after his Death. Viſibly aſcended from Earth, and diſappeared from amongſt Men. And afterwards appeared in a Viſion to St. PAUL going to Damaſcus: and laſt of all to St. JOHN in the Iſle of Patmos.

If any further Proof is required, that JESUS was the MESSIAH, we may appeal to his Character, his Life, his Miracles, his Prophecies, and his Doctrine.

1. He was himſelf a Pattern of thoſe Virtues, which he recommends to his Followers: and the only Perſon of the Race of ADAM free from Sin. His ſuperior Worth drew on him Hatred, Malice, and Perſecution; to which he made no other return than Patience and Forgiveneſs.

giveneſs. And when he could have called for Legions of Angels to his Aid, he yielded himſelf up to the moſt cruel Indignities and Torments, and prayed for his Enemies at his Death. He was, as the Prophet deſcribes him, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. He was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth. He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter; and as a Sheep before her Shearers was dumb. He did no Violence, neither was any Deceit in his Mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to Grief, when he made his Soul an Offering for Sin: he was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our Iniquities; the Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.——Thus it pleaſed GOD, in the wonderful Diſpenſations of his Providence, (having before prepared Men by

a very general Notion of Expiation of Sins by Sacrifice) in this Inſtance to make the only Man that ever was without Sin to attone for the Sins of Mankind.

2. His Life was one continued Scene of laudable and benevolent Actions. He went about doing good; and inſtructing Men how to behave in this Life ſo as to be happy in the next, that Life of Immortality, which he brought to light thro' his Goſpel.

3. Many were the Miracles he performed to prove the Truth of his Miſſion and Doctrine, and which proved him to be more than Man, with Powers exceeding human. He ſhewed a Power of Creation, by multiplying the Loaves and Fiſhes: of altering the Qualities of Bodies, by changing the Water into Wine: of changing their ſpecific Gravity, by walking on the Sea: over the vegetable Part of the Globe, by blaſting the Fig-Tree: over the watery Tribe, by the

wonderful Draught of Fiſhes, and by taking of the Fiſh with the Tribute-money: over terreſtrial Animals, by the Swine running headlong into the Sea: over his own Mind, by reſiſting all Occaſion and Temptation of Sin: over his own Body, by faſting forty Days; by his Transfiguration; by his Reſurrection; and by his Aſcenſion: over the Minds of others, by curing of Lunatics, and by caſting out Devils, or (as I imagine) curing of thoſe who were furiouſly mad: over their Bodies, by curing all manner of Diſeaſes; the Leper, the Woman with the bloody Iſſue; the Deaf, the Dumb, the Lame, and the Blind; and by raiſing LAZARUS and others from the Dead.—And how were theſe Miracles performed? by no other Means than his Will or his Word; often in the Abſence of the Parties, an Evidence that his Power was not confined to Things near at hand; as his Prophecies are, that he knew future as well

as

as preſent Things. They were not performed in a Corner, but before thouſands: the Fame of them went through Paleſtine and Syria: Multitudes reſorted to JESUS, and brought Perſons to be cured of all manner of Diſeaſes: the Perſons cured publiſhed the Facts, of which ſeveral of them remained living Witneſſes many Years after CHRIST's Death and Reſurrection. The Facts were ſo ſtrongly atteſted, that the moſt inveterate Enemies of Chriſtianity could not deny them; and found no better Subterfuge, than to aſcribe them to Magic, or as the Jews expreſſed it, that he caſt out Devils by Belzebub: a Suppoſition equally weak and wicked, and which is confuted and expoſed by CHRIST himſelf.

4. The Prophecies of CHRIST relate either to himſelf; to his Diſciples; to the Jews; to the Chriſtians; or to Mankind in general.

1. As

1. As to himſelf: he foretold, that he ſhould be betrayed to the Chief Prieſts, and unto the Scribes, and that they ſhould condemn him to Death, and ſhould deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, to ſcourge and to crucify him; and that the third Day he ſhould riſe again. And that all the Tribes of the Earth ſhould ſee him come again in the Clouds with Power and great Glory. The firſt Part of theſe Prophecies have been fulfilled: which is an Earneſt that the laſt will be ſo.

2. As to his Diſciples: he foretold ſome Things relating to ſome of them in particular: as that one that ſate with him at Meat ſhould betray him: and that PETER ſhould deny him thrice before the Cock crew. Others he foretold of them in general: as that they ſhould be hated and perſecuted; delivered up to the Council, and ſcourged in the Synagogues; that they ſhould be brought before Kings and Governours for his Sake; and that it

ſhould

ſhould be given in the ſelf ſame Hour what they ſhould ſpeak. Theſe Predictions were fully verified. The Diſciples, convinced of the Importance of his Miſſion, and of the Truth of his Doctrine, were not diſcouraged by any Danger from purſuing his Orders. As he told them it was enough for the Diſciple to be as his Maſter, they took up his Croſs, and followed him. They boldly entered on their Office: what he told them in Darkneſs they ſpoke in the Light; and what they heard in the Ear they preached on the Houſe-tops. They aſſerted his Doctrine before the Rulers of the Earth; and, illiterate as they were, they wanted neither Argument or Language to defend it; for it happened as he had foretold, that it was not they that ſhould ſpeak, but the Spirit of the Father. They relied on Providence for their Guard, having learned from him, that the Hairs of their Head were all numbered, and that not a Sparrow fell to the Ground

Ground without the Father, and that they were of more Value than many Sparrows. They feared not thoſe who could kill the Body only, being perſuaded, that he who loſeth his Life for CHRIST's Sake ſhould find it. And they confirmed their Doctrine by the Miracles which, he had aſſured them, if they wanted not Faith, they ſhould perform.

3. As to the Jews: he foretold, that of the Temple of Jeruſalem there ſhould not be left one Stone upon another, which ſhould not be thrown down. That the Enemies ſhould caſt a Trench about Jeruſalem, and compaſs her round, and keep her in on every Side, and lay her even with the Ground, and that they ſhould not leave in her one Stone upon another. All which was fulfilled when it was deſtroyed by TITUS.

4. As to the Chriſtians: he foretold, that in the Courſe of his Goſpel falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets ſhould ariſe, who

who ſhould ſhew Signs and Wonders, to ſeduce, if poſſible, even the Elect. SIMON MAGUS, and many ſince have verified the firſt Part of this Prophecy, and MAHOMET the laſt. He likewiſe foretold, that Men ſhould ſay, See here, or ſee there! lo here is CHRIST, or there! but he commands them not to believe it; for the Kingdom of GOD cometh not with Obſervation (or outward Shew) but is within you. How neceſſary was this Caution! when we reflect how this Prophecy has been verified by the Pretenſions of all the different Sects of Chriſtians; particularly of the Pope, who calls himſelf the Vicar of CHRIST, and is called by others Antichriſt. Again, though our Saviour has declared, that the Doctrine of his Goſpel was Love and Peace, yet he foretold it would not entirely have that Effect: and that he was come, not to give Peace, but Diviſion and a Sword: that Men ſhould hate and betray one another:

that

that Brother ſhould betray Brother to Death; the Father the Son; and Children riſe up againſt their Parents, and cauſe them to be put to Death; and that Iniquity ſhould abound. This Prophecy has been very ſufficiently verified; and Perſecution for Religion (which was little known before the Goſpel) has been carried to the greateſt Exceſs of Cruelty, at firſt by the heathen Emperors againſt the Chriſtians, and ſince by the different Sects of Chriſtians againſt each other. Laſtly, he foretold, that the Goſpel ſhould be preached in all the World, for a Witneſs to all Nations, and then ſhall the End come. Though the Goſpel has been already preached in many different Parts of this Globe, yet the Prophecy is far from being at this Time compleated; and therefore we need not expect the Diſſolution of the World (that is, of Mankind) yet: for this Generation (that is, the Race of ADAM) ſhall not paſs away, till all theſe Things

Things (of which the general preaching of the Goſpel is one) be fulfilled. Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away, (that is, this Generation ſhall be taken from the Earth) but my Words ſhall not paſs away; that is, the Goſpel ſhall afterwards remain, as the Record of the Trial and Sentence of the preſent Race of Men: and the Moral Precepts of it are eternal.

5. As to Mankind in general: he foretold his coming again in Glory to judge the whole Race of Mankind: the End of them here: the Separation of the Righteous from the Wicked: a future State of Happineſs for the firſt, and of Miſery for the laſt. Theſe Prophecies remain to be fulfilled; and I ſhall enlarge upon them in another Place.

5. I come now to ſpeak of the Doctrine of CHRIST: what he commands to be done, and what to be believed.

He informs the World, that he is not come to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfill it: intimating

intimating that he is the great Prophet foretold by MOSES, who was to teach Men the perfect Will of GOD, both with regard to GOD and Man.

1. With regard to GOD. He eſtabliſhes that firſt and great Commandment of the Law, as neceſſary to eternal Life, to love GOD with all the Heart, Soul, Strength and Mind. He tells us, to fear him who is not only able to deſtroy the Body, but to caſt the Soul into Hell. He directs us to pray, but not to be ſeen of Men: to pray in the Cloſet and in ſecret, becauſe GOD ſeeth in ſecret: not to uſe vain Repetitions, becauſe he knoweth what we have need of before we aſk: and that we may not addreſs the Supreme Being improperly, he hath furniſhed us with a moſt ſhort, excellent, and comprehenſive Form. He hath preſcribed no particular Form of publick Worſhip; but hath left it to the Choice of every particular Perſon in private, and of every Country in public. He

neither confined himſelf or others to particular Times or Places of Worſhip. He reſted not on the Sabbath from doing Good. He taught not only in the Synagogue and Temple, but on the Mountain, on the Sea, and in the Wilderneſs. GOD dwells not in Temples made with Hands, but in the Heart; therefore his Worſhip is not local; but, like that of CHRIST, may be exerciſed alike in every Part of this Globe. To ſerve GOD, no Man need go to a Temple at Jeruſalem, a Moſque at Mecca, or St. PETER's at Rome: GOD hath erected his Temple in the Heart of Man, and conſequently can in no Part of the World be deſtitute of Places of Worſhip where there are Men.

2. With regard to other Men. He teaches univerſal Benevolence. To look on all Mankind, of what Nation or Sect ſoever, as our Neighbours; and like the good Samaritan, to aſſiſt them. To love them as ourſelves. To do to them, as we would

would they ſhould do unto us. Not to judge others, leſt we be judged. Not to ſee their Faults, and be blind to our own. Not to be angry with our Brother without a Cauſe; but to love even our Enemies. Not to curſe our Brother, or call him Fool; but to bleſs thoſe who curſe us. Not to retaliate Injuries, or reſiſt Evil, but to him that ſmiteth us on the right Cheek, to turn the other alſo. To do Good to them that hate us. To pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us, and perſecute us. To forgive an offending Brother not ſeven times only, but ſeventy times ſeven; the Condition on which GOD will forgive us. To live thus peaceably with others; and to be Peace-makers amongſt others, with the Promiſe of a Bleſſing, if we are ſo. This is our Duty to others, as private Men. As Members of the State, we are to give unto CÆSAR the Things that are

CÆSAR's; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Honour to whom Honour.

3. With regard to a Man's ſelf. He teaches us to be poor in Spirit, meek, merciful, poor in Heart, hungring and thirſting after Righteouſneſs, and exceeding glad when reviled and perſecuted for it's ſake. Maſters of our carnal Affections, ſo as not to look on a Woman to luſt after her. We are to let our Light ſhine before Men, that they may ſee our good Works; but not to be oſtentatious of them. When we do Alms, we are not to let the Left-hand know what the Right-hand doth. When we pray, 'tis not to be in the Corners of the Street, but in the Cloſet. When we faſt, 'tis not to be with a ſad, but a chearful Countenance. We are not to be like the Scribes and Phariſees, who do all their Works to be ſeen of Men; make broad their Phylacteries; enlarge the Borders of their Garments; love the uppermoſt Rooms at Feaſts;

Feasts; and chief Seats in the Synagogues; and Greetings in the Market; and to be called of Men, Rabbi, Rabbi. We cannot serve GOD and Mammon; therefore are not to lay up Treasures on Earth, but in Heaven. Should not be solicitous for Food or Raiment; but first seek the Kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness, and rely on his Providence for them. We are to love neither Father, Mother, Son, or Daughter, more than CHRIST; but are to take up his Cross and follow him, (i. e. suffer like him for Righteousness Sake) for he that findeth his Life (i. e. saves it in this World by denying him) shall lose it, (i. e. in a future State) but he that loseth his Life (i. e. is a Martyr) for his Sake, shall find it (i. e. be eternally happy.)

This is the most perfect System of Morality that ever was proposed to Man. Worthy of the great Prophet foretold by MOSES, who was to teach them all they were

to do, and whom they were to hear. A Religion, not like the Jewiſh, requiring many vain Ceremonies, and external Performances; but only a right Diſpoſition of the Mind, and a reaſonable Employment of it's Faculties. It injoins but two Ceremonies, in their own Nature indifferent, as Seals or Marks on it's Profeſſors, to teſtify to the World their Faith and the Author of it: neither of them burdenſome; but both eaſy to be performed in any Part of the World. The one is to be baptized in the Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST: the other ſometimes to eat Bread, and drink the Cup, in Remembrance of CHRIST, and his Sufferings for Mankind.

Theſe Things the Chriſtian Religion requires to be done. What does it require Men to believe?—One GOD; that GOD diſtinguiſhed into FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST: that SON taking or uniting to himſelf JESUS of the Houſe of

DAVID

DAVID to be the eternal Prince of Mankind; that JESUS, heretofore inſtructing and dying for Man, now in a State of Glory interceding for him with GOD, hereafter to come again to be his Judge, and to take with him all the Righteous of the Race of ADAM into Manſions of everlaſting Bliſs.

This is the general Subſtance of the Chriſtian Faith contained in Scripture. The Articles of it lie diſperſed there: but have been collected, methodized, and preſented in one ſummary View in ſeveral Creeds which have been formed for the Uſe and Eaſe of the Generality of Mankind, who are not able to make ſuch Abſtracts for themſelves. Creeds are human Compoſitions; and therefore of no Authority. They are no further to be attended to than they are warranted by Scripture, which is the ſole Rule of Faith. They may be propoſed, but cannot be impoſed. Every one, who is able,

ſhould compare them with the Goſpel, to ſee if they be agreeable to it. Of this a Man muſt judge for himſelf. He can have no other Opinion than his own: others cannot think for him, nor he for them. If he differs in Opinion from another concerning any Mode or Circumſtance of any abſtruſe and myſterious Article of the Chriſtian Faith, he does no more than different Popes, Synods, and Councils have done before on the ſame Points. He only exerciſes that Liberty which CHRIST allows. He allows Men to conjecture, but not to decide ſuch Points which he was not pleaſed fully to reveal. Thoſe Glimmerings of Light which he hath afforded us concerning them, are Intimations that what we cannot plainly diſcern here, will be diſcloſed to us hereafter. Let a Man think as he pleaſes about the Myſteries of Chriſtianity, if he conforms but his Actions to the plain Precepts of it: by the firſt he can

hurt

hurt neither himſelf nor others; by the laſt he will moſt certainly benefit both. In delivering his Opinions on theſe Myſteries, let him be charitable, allowing to others the ſame Liberty of Sentiment which he aſſumes to himſelf: let him be humble, not peremptorily deciding beyond what the Scripture hath decided: but let him be confident of one Thing, that, though it may contain many Things above his Comprehenſion, it can contain nothing repugnant to Reaſon.

The Tenets which principally diſtinguiſh the Chriſtian Religion from all others, and of which Men could have no Conception or Idea by the Light of Nature, relate, 1. To the Deity: 2. To the Union of CHRIST to the Deity: 3. To a Reſurrection and Judgment preceding a future State.

As to the firſt. God, whoſe Nature is incomprehenſible, hath been pleaſed to reveal to us, that there are three Perſons in

in the Godhead: not three distinct Qualities or Attributes only, but three distinct intelligent Agents; for distinct Actions and Offices are ascribed to them, which could not be to Qualities or Attributes, but must be to Persons or intelligent Agents. These three Persons are of the same Essence, and have the same Attributes; but are distinct in Intelligence and in Operation, always willing the same; and always acting in Harmony. They are often expresly mentioned together in Scripture: the whole Tenor of the Scripture implies, that they are distinct: and the Scripture would be unintelligible, if they are not conceived to be so: and that all Nations should conceive them to be so was the Intention of CHRIST, when he ordered them to be baptized in the Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. The FATHER is self-existent, and supreme, the Author of all Beings, and the Fountain

Fountain of all Power, and in the moſt exalted Senſe GOD.

The SON is derived (or begotten) from the FATHER alone: and receiving his Being from him, conſequently is not originally GOD, but GOD of GOD. Having been with the FATHER from the Beginning, that is, before all other Beings or Worlds, and before even all Computation of Time. In which Senſe only he is eternal; not in the moſt abſolute Senſe, as the Epithet is aſcribed to the FATHER: for tho' he is before all Worlds, he muſt be after the FATHER, becauſe he derives his Exiſtence from him. He is begotten, not made; that is, he is of the ſame Eſſence with the FATHER, from whom he derives his Exiſtence: and the Expreſſion (begotten) is uſed to convey that Idea to us: for in our Conception, every Thing that is begotten, is of the ſame Nature with that which begot it; but nothing that is made, is of the ſame Nature

ture with that which made it. The Expreſſion (begotten) is not uſed to convey any Idea of this Divine Generation: that is known to GOD alone. Man is ignorant of the Manner of his own Generation, or of that of any Animal or Vegetable: and it would be the moſt blaſphemous Preſumption in ſo inconſiderable a Creature of the Univerſe to attempt to explain that of the SON of GOD. Tho' the SON is of the ſame Subſtance or Eſſence, yet he is ſubordinate to the FATHER, who is greater. This is expreſly ſaid in Scripture; and is implied through the whole Tenor of it. Therefore when the Athanaſian Creed ſays, he is equal to the FATHER as touching his Godhead, it muſt be underſtood only, that he is equally of the ſame Divine Nature, not equal in Authority: for he in every Thing does the Will of the FATHER. Not my Will, ſays he, but thine be done.

The

The third Perſon who has exiſted from the Beginning (or before all Worlds) with the other two, is the HOLY GHOST, The Eternal, the Holy Spirit, who ſpoke by the Prophets and Apoſtles; by whom JESUS was conceived; the COMFORTER ſent by the FATHER and the SON; to moralize and ſanctify the World. Who will continue with Mankind (that is, aſſiſt) to conduct them into the Way of Truth, until they ſhall be removed from this Globe.

As the two laſt Perſons derive their Exiſtence and Authority from the FATHER, they are ſubordinate to him, who is the only ſupreme GOD, who governs all Things by their Miniſtration, and by and through them is worſhipped and glorified; for as CHRIST himſelf hath ſaid, and directed us to ſay, His is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. But tho' the other Perſons are ſubordinate to the FATHER, yet we conceive them to be

of

of the ſame Nature and Perfections: in which Senſe, and in which alone, the three Perſons can be ſaid or underſtood to be co-equal.

For in other reſpects, as the SON himſelf hath declared, the FATHER is greater than he. The FATHER is GOD of himſelf, the other Perſons GOD of GOD. The FATHER ſelf-exiſtent, the others deriving their Exiſtence from him. Some Things none knoweth ſave the FATHER only, others he hath revealed to the SON alone. The FATHER doth whatſoever he pleaſeth, the SON only what he ſeeth the FATHER do: the SON and HOLY SPIRIT in all Things performing his Will. The SON is ſent (or commiſſioned) by the FATHER; the HOLY GHOST (or COMFORTER) by the FATHER and the SON: and he that ſends is greater than him that is ſent. That Expreſſion therefore in the Athanaſian Creed, that none of the Perſons is before or after other, none greater

or

or less than the other, but their Glory equal, is scarce reconcileable to Scripture; or to reconcile it, must be understood with great Limitations.

This Idea which we receive from Scripture, of three Divine Persons subsisting together from Eternity in the Godhead, is more chearful than that of a Deity existing from Eternity, without any Communication of his Ideas before the Creation of the Universe.

It gives us also a more exalted Notion of the Theocracy, or GOD's Government of the Universe: when we consider the other two Persons performing the high Behests of the FATHER, and by his Order co-operating with him in the Creation, Preservation, and Sanctification, not only of this little Globe of our's, but of every Part of Nature.

But there will always remain two great Difficulties in the Doctrine of the Trinity. 1. How it is consistent with the Unity

ty of the Godhead. 2. How it is conſiſtent with the Eternity of the SON and HOLY GHOST.

To reconcile it to the Unity, we are to believe, 1. That notwithſtanding there are three diſtinct Perſons or intelligent Agents in the Godhead, which we are not to confound, yet, as is ſaid in the Athanaſian Creed, we are not to divide the Subſtance, which ſtill remains but one: for the Divine Eſſence, being ſpiritual, cannot be divided; and being infinite, cannot be multiplied. The SON is ſaid to be in the Boſom of the FATHER; that is, wherever the FATHER is, there is the SON, and there too is the HOLY GHOST. This is very difficult for us to conceive, who borrow our Ideas from viſible Objects here below: and no Parallel can be made from created Things. All created Beings occupy particular Parts of Space, and are each ſeparated in Place from the other: the Godhead goes through

through all Space, and conſequently each Perſon in it muſt be ever and throughout united. We cannot conceive three Men in this manner to be one, or to be in one Place at the ſame time. We cannot conceive one Man to have three Souls, three Underſtandings, or three Wills: or three Men to have one Soul, one Underſtanding, or one Will. We cannot conceive three Men, or even one Man, always to have the ſame Thoughts and Inclinations; or three Men to know the Thoughts and Inclinations of each other. But God's Nature is not like Man's Nature; his Thoughts like Man's Thoughts; his Ways like Man's Ways: his Ways are unſearchable; his Counſels impenetrable; and his Nature incomprehenſible. It is not for Man to explain this Myſtery; or to ſay, it is, or it is not thus. As it was at firſt diſcovered to him in Scripture, all that he can know of it he muſt learn from thence, and muſt not be wiſe beyond

what is there written. 2. As the three Perſons are but one in Eſſence; ſo are they but one in Will and in Harmony of Action; the SON and HOLY GHOST always either co-operating with the FATHER, or performing his Will.

The other Difficulty with regard to the Trinity, is the Eternity of the SON and HOLY GHOST. For we are at a loſs to conceive, how Perſons, who derive their Exiſtence from another, ſhould always have been; or not aſcribe a Priority to him, from whom they derive their Exiſtence. We can conceive them to have been, as St. JOHN ſays, in the Beginning, before any thing was made: or, as the Nicene Creed expreſſes it, before all Worlds: we may impute to them a Duration beyond what either the Force of Imagination or Numbers can reach: but when we have done all, we can ſcarce ſay, as the Athanaſian Creed does, that none of the Perſons are before or after

other: or when it ſays they are co-eternal, aſcribe the ſame Sort of Eternity to the two laſt as to the FATHER. Whenever we contemplate this Point, we muſt be ſenſible, that we cannot comprehend it in this Life; and that the Line of our Underſtanding is much too ſhallow to fathom the Depths of Eternity. It is ſufficient for Chriſtians to believe, that there are three Perſons in one Godhead. The Nature of the Deity is above Man's Comprehenſion, as well as the Manner of the Co-exiſtence of the three Perſons in it. When Men therefore attempt to explain any Part of this Myſtery, it is only propoſing an Opinion, which the reſt of Mankind are at Liberty to receive or reject. The Scripture is the Standard, by which ſuch Explications are to be tried. And whether they are agreeable to Scripture every one muſt judge for himſelf. It is arrogant in any to inſiſt on their own Senſe as a neceſſary Rule of Faith; and

impious and unchriſtian to curſe others, if they do not believe it. Theſe things were revealed to make Men humble, not proud and contentious.

The next Tenet, which diſtinguiſhes the Chriſtian Religion, is the Union of JESUS to the ſecond Perſon of the Deity, by which he became both GOD and MAN, or one CHRIST. An ineffable Myſtery, as well as the Trinity! on which Men may diſpute, but which they can never explain. This, as we are told in Scripture, was performed by the Operation of the HOLY GHOST: therefore he is ſaid, in the Apoſtles Creed, to be conceived, in the Nicene, to be incarnate, by the HOLY GHOST. In what Manner exceeds our Comprehenſion; if we cannot comprehend how Man is conceived in the natural Courſe, we certainly cannot this miraculous Conception: if we cannot tell how the Soul is united to the Body, much leſs can we explain how the

Body and Soul of JESUS was united to the Deity. I think the cleareſt Explanation, that is to be found, of this abſtruſe Point, is in the Athanaſian Creed, viz. That our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, is GOD and MAN. GOD, of the Subſtance of the FATHER, begotten before the Worlds; and MAN, of the Subſtance of his Mother, born in the World. Perfect GOD, and perfect MAN, of a reaſonable Soul and human Fleſh ſubſiſting. Equal to the FATHER, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the FATHER, as touching his Manhood. Who, although he be GOD and MAN, yet he is not two, but one CHRIST. One; not by Converſion of the Godhead into Fleſh; but by taking the Manhood into GOD. One altogether; not by Confuſion of Subſtance, but by Unity of Perſon. For as the reaſonable Soul and Fleſh is one Man, ſo GOD and MAN is one CHRIST.—Theſe Words (according

to my Apprehenſion) intend to ſhew, that JESUS, who was miraculouſly born of the Virgin MARY, was in a peculiar Manner united to the ſecond Perſon in the Godhead. That by ſuch Union he became CHRIST; or the ANOINTED; to be a Prophet to inſtruct, a Prieſt to redeem, and a King to judge and govern Mankind. That as the Union of Soul and Body compoſe but one Perſon, or one Man; ſo the Union of the Soul and Body of JESUS to the ſecond Perſon in the Godhead, compoſed but one Perſon, or one CHRIST. That, as the Soul and Body of a Man, which are of different Natures, ſtill continue ſo whilſt united; ſo the Soul and Body of JESUS, which were both of a different Nature from the Godhead, ſtill continued ſo after they were united to it in him. Theſe Natures were not confounded, though united: for it is blaſphemous to imagine, that GOD could be converted into Man, or Man into

into GOD. The Manner of this Union cannot be better expreſſed, than by ſaying, it was not by Converſion of the Godhead into Fleſh, but by taking the Manhood into GOD, in whom all Things are contained. Not by Confuſion of Subſtance (divine and human) but by Unity of Perſon; that is, by uniting the Perſon of JESUS (and of JESUS only, ſelected from all Mankind) to the Godhead, in a more peculiar Manner, and more intimately than all other Men.

On this myſterious Subject Men have been led into great Confuſion and Perplexity by two Things: 1. By not ſufficiently attending to the Diſtinction between the SON of GOD (the ſecond Perſon of the Trinity) begotten of his FATHER before all Worlds, and JESUS (who, by being peculiarly united to that Perſon, is likewiſe called the SON of GOD) born in the World. 2. By imagining, that by ſuch Union CHRIST became LORD of the Univerſe; whereas his Commiſſion

extends only to our Planet, and the preſent Race of Mankind.

The Athanaſian Creed is juſtly blameable for ſetting up a human Compoſition, as the Standard of Salvation; and for requiring an implicit Belief of the Tenets contained in it under the Penalty of Damnation. When many have thought ſome of thoſe Tenets very doubtful, and others repugnant to Scripture. But notwithſtanding theſe glaring Imperfections, the Methods it proceeds in is better than either that of the Nicene or Apoſtles Creed. For it firſt treats of the three Perſons in the Godhead, and afterwards of the Incarnation or taking of JESUS into the Godhead, and uniting him to the ſecond Perſon of it. Whereas the other two Creeds, without previouſly ſetting forth the Trinity, inſert the Name of JESUS between the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST. Which, if not properly attended to, and explained, may make the Generality of People confound the two Natures in CHRIST;

CHRIST; the divine, which exiſted before the World; and the human, which was taken into or united to the divine at the Time of the Incarnation.

The Nicene Creed, after profeſſing a Belief in the FATHER, proceeds thus: "And in one LORD JESUS CHRIST, the "only begotten SON of GOD: begotten "of his FATHER before all Worlds: GOD "of GOD, &c. being of one Subſtance "with the FATHER."—Which muſt be thus underſtood, viz. That JESUS CHRIST was the only MAN, who became the SON of GOD, by being at the time of the Incarnation united to the only begotten SON, begotten of his FATHER before all Worlds, GOD of GOD, of one Subſtance with the FATHER. For JESUS, as a MAN, was born in Bethlehem, of the Subſtance of his Mother: in the World, not before it.

The Apoſtles Creed, without ſaying any thing of the ſecond Perſon of the Trinity, begotten before all Worlds, af-

ter

ter the FATHER ALMIGHTY, immediately names "JESUS CHRIST, his only be-"gotten SON, our LORD, who was con-"ceived by the HOLY GHOST, born of "the Virgin MARY."—So that an ignorant Perſon in reading this Creed would, from the literal Senſe of the Words, imagine, that before JESUS was born, there was no only begotten SON of GOD; as he might in reading the Nicene, that JESUS was begotten before all Worlds.

The true Senſe in which JESUS in Scripture is called the SON, and only begotten SON of GOD: is, 1. As he is united to the only begotten SON, or ſecond Perſon of the Trinity. 2. As he is the only Man of the Race of ADAM that ever was ſo.

But although he is the only Man ever thus united, we muſt not from thence conclude, that he is the only intelligent or rational Being, that ever has been, or will be ſo. The SON, or ſecond Perſon

of

the Trinity, is under the FATHER, and by his Order, the Inſtructor, Redeemer, Judge, and King of all ſuch Beings, not only on our Globe, but on every Globe, and in every Quarter of the Univerſe: as the HOLY GHOST is their Sanctifier. In order to inſtruct, redeem, judge and govern the Race of ADAM, he united to himſelf JESUS: and for the ſame or ſimilar Ends he may have, and probably hath, united to himſelf other rational Creatures in other Planets. JESUS is not their Saviour, nor they the Saviour of Mankind. JESUS, as to his Manhood, was of the Race of ADAM, deſcended from ABRAHAM and DAVID. He was ſent to inſtruct his own Species only. He died for Men, and Men only. He ſuffered on Earth for Sins only committed on Earth. His Tranſactions here no more concern other Globes, than the Tranſactions there do us. To imagine that his Authority extends to other Globes is as abſurd, as

to

to imagine that a Magiſtrate in any particular State here, is a Magiſtrate in every other: or that a Commiſſion to act in England, gives a Man Authority in Mexico or Japan.

I am very deſirous of being thoroughly underſtood on this Point; which appears to me of the laſt Importance to true Chriſtianity. It has ſcarce been touched on, or but very ſlightly, by Divines: and yet it is extremely neceſſary it ſhould be cleared up. Till it is cleared up, the Ideas of Men will remain very confuſed; and many of the moſt ſpeculative will be either Sceptics or Infidels. The Interpretation I contend for is clear and intelligible; any other, I think, ſhocks Nature and common Senſe; and therefore cannot be agreeable to Scripture, which through the whole requires the firſt Interpretation.

It may be aſked, how came it then not to prevail before? for it can ſcarce be aſked,

aſked, why ſhould it prevail now? unleſs thoſe who aſk the Queſtion will ſay, that Mankind ought never to grow wiſer, or underſtand Scripture better than they did before. And as to the firſt Queſtion, I think ſeveral Reaſons may be aſſigned.

1. Ignorance in Natural Philoſophy was the great and principal Reaſon. For many Ages after CHRIST, the Ptolemaic was the only prevailing Syſtem of the Univerſe. The Earth was eſteemed the Center of it; for whoſe Sake all the celeſtial Bodies were made, and moved round it only to adminiſter Heat or Light. This was long taken for granted without Examination. Men eaſily believed what flattered their Pride, and ſeemed confirmed by outward Appearance. The Earth appeared greateſt to Man; and he was the moſt conſiderable upon Earth. And as Ignorance and Vanity conducted him into Errors of Philoſophy, ſo did they into Errors of Faith. And both

went

went on increasing by the literal and false Interpretations, which blind Guides put on Scripture. And a furious Zeal (always the Attendant on Ignorance) made it dangerous for Men to declare their Opinions freely either in Philosophy or Religion, for fear of being condemned and murdered as Heretics. Whilst therefore Men were no better informed than to think our Earth the Universe; they could, as Christians, have no other Notion, than that JESUS was the Saviour of the whole.

2. Since Men have been convinced of the immense Extent of the Universe; and that every Globe in it is inhabited, many Reasons have kept them silent on this Subject. In Popish Countries, the Fear of a Pope, or an Inquisition, if they should advance any thing, that should be deemed heretical. In Protestant Countries, among the Laity the Fear of being thought singular; among the Clergy, of being thought unorthodox; which any Opinion may

may be, which either wants or contradicts the Authority (or rather the No-Authority) of a Father, Synod or Council. Another Reaſon may be, the Difficulty to make the Vulgar underſtand it, which they could not without ſome previous Knowledge of Geography and Aſtronomy: for want of which they will continue to think this Globe the whole habitable World; and whilſt they do ſo, it is no Error in them to believe JESUS to be the Saviour of the whole. But Men of Learning and Speculation think not with the Vulgar. GOD has opened wider to them both the Book of Nature and of the Scripture; and intends they ſhould uſe the firſt as a Comment on the other: that, as CHRIST hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Goſpel, that Light might ſhine ſtill brighter to illuſtrate the Truth of the Goſpel. In which there are many things, which perhaps were not known to the inſpired Writers

Writers themſelves, (for they did not ſpeak but as the HOLY GHOST gave them Utterance) the Truth of which will continue gradually to open and diſcloſe itſelf to Mankind, both in this Life and in the next.

And let no one think it derogatory to the Honour of CHRSIT, to rank him with numberleſs other Saviours and Mediators, which GOD hath eſtabliſhed between himſelf and the rational Beings which he hath created. With regard to us, JESUS CHRIST, as he is united to the Godhead for our ſakes, is a moſt divine and adorable Perſon: the Prince and the Hierach of all the Race of ADAM, which have exiſted, and ſhall exiſt till his ſecond coming. He was ſent to inſtruct them by his holy Life and Doctrine, to redeem them by his bitter Death and Paſſion, and to confirm them by his glorious Reſurrection and Aſcenſion: to the end, that if they are holy in this Life, as he was holy,

they

they may follow him to that State of Glory to which he is already exalted. For he is the Way to lead MEN into the right Way: the Truth to guide them into all Truth: and the Life to conduct them to everlasting Life. He is the only Mediator between GOD and Man. No Man cometh to the Father but by him. His is the only Name under Heaven, by which MEN can be saved.

The next distinguishing Tenet of the Christian Religion is the Belief of the Resurrection of the Body. 1. That of CHRIST, which has already happened: 2. That of all Mankind, which is to happen at his second coming.

1. The Resurrection of CHRIST is a Matter of Fact, which could be only proved by Evidence. And no Fact was ever more strongly attested. For after his Resurrection, St. PAUL says, he was seen of CEPHAS; then of the Twelve. After that, he was seen of more than five

hundred Brethren at once: whereof many remain unto the preſent, and ſome alſo are fallen aſleep. After that he was ſeen of JAMES; then of all the Apoſtles. And laſt of all he was ſeen alſo of me, as of one born out of due Time.—This certainly is ſufficient Evidence to eſtabliſh the Fact.

2. The Reſurrection of CHRIST is a Prelude to that of Mankind, and an Earneſt that it will happen at the laſt Day. He is called the firſt Fruits of them that ſlept: and the Beginning and firſt begotten of the Dead; and we are to reſemble him in the Likeneſs of his Reſurrection. How then was CHRIST raiſed? and with what Body did he come? He was raiſed with the identical Body that was laid in the Grave; and which did not continue there long enough to ſee Corruption. This can be the Caſe of few beſides; only of thoſe few, who ſhall die juſt before the laſt Day. Others too will riſe again

again with corruptible Bodies (no matter whether compoſed of any of the ſame Particles as before) ſufficient to diſtinguiſh the Identity of their Perſons. To the end, that all Men may be judged in the Fleſh on Earth for the Works they had done on Earth in the Fleſh. But as St. PAUL ſays, Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of GOD. Therefore we are not to imagine (nor is it reaſonable to imagine) that Men are to paſs with the ſame Bodies into another State. No: St. PAUL ſays, he will ſhew a great Myſtery: we ſhall all be changed in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye: this Corruptible muſt put on Incorruption; this Mortal ſhall put on Immortality; and that which was ſown a natural Body, ſhall become a ſpiritual Body; as the Body of Chriſt did before his Aſcenſion, and before he could ſit down at the Right-hand of GOD, amongſt the holy Angels, who are made ſubject to him; and with

whom he will come again in the Clouds with Power and great Glory to judge both the Quick and Dead. At that Day (in the ſame manner as CHRIST himſelf aſcended into Heaven) St. PAUL ſays, the Dead in CHRIST ſhall riſe; and ſhall be caught up into the Clouds to meet the LORD in the Air.—And why (as the ſame Apoſtle ſays) ſhould it be thought incredible, that GOD ſhould raiſe the Dead? It is not incredible, becauſe impoſſible; for nothing is ſo with GOD; and in this Inſtance, it requires no greater Power to raiſe Man's Body, than at firſt to create it. It is not incredible, becauſe irrational; for nothing can be more rational, than for GOD to vindicate his Juſtice on Earth in the Face of all Mankind: that every wrong Sentence given here may here be reverſed: that thoſe, who have been unjuſtly condemned may be acquitted: and thoſe who have been unjuſtly acquitted may be condemned: that even here the

proſperous wicked Man may begin to ſuffer, and the afflicted good One to be comforted, before their Puniſhment or Reward be compleat.

To the Reſurrection of the Body is immediately to ſucceed the Judgment of Mankind, and the End of the World; that is, of all things on the Face of this Globe. But the End is not yet: the Goſpel ſhall be preached in all the World for a Witneſs to all Nations, and then ſhall the End come. But of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no, not the Angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. It ſhall come like a Thief in the Night: and as in the Day of NOAH they knew not, till the Flood came, and took them all away; ſo ſhall the coming of the Son of Man be. Be ready therefore, take heed, watch and pray, leſt the LORD coming ſuddenly ſhall find you ſleeping, or (which is worſe) ſmiting your Fellow-ſervants, and eating

and drinking with the Drunken.—But tho' we know not in what Hour he will come; the Manner of his coming is revealed to us, and chiefly by himſelf.

The Approach of this great Judge will be uſhered in with moſt amazing Pomp and Solemnity. The Sun ſhall be darkened, the Moon ſhall not give her Light, the Stars (i. e. Meteors) ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens (i. e. Air) ſhall be ſhaken, the Sea and the Waves roaring. And what Wonder? if then all the Tribes of the Earth mourn; if Mens Hearts fail them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe things, which are coming on the Earth. For then they ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.

And he ſhall ſend his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet to ſummon Mankind. And they ſhall gather his Elect from the four Winds, and from

one End of Heaven to the other: where we may ſuppoſe they have the Liberty to expatiate, and to contemplate GOD's Works, till they are ſummoned to reſume their Bodies to appear at this great Tribunal, in order to receive from their LORD more ample Praiſe and Reward. They will therefore receive this Summons with Joy! How different from the Guilty! who (wherever they are) will call on the Mountains to fall on them, and the Waves of the Sea to cover them, from the Fierceneſs of his Wrath and the Vengeance of his Power. But in vain! For every Eye ſhall ſee him; and they alſo which pierced him; and all Kindreds of the Earth ſhall wail becauſe of him. In this manner, thoſe good Men who ſleep in JESUS (i. e. ſhall then be dead) GOD will bring with him; and when he ſhall deſcend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangels, and with the Trump of GOD, they ſhall riſe

firſt: and thoſe other good Men, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the LORD, ſhall not ſleep, (i. e. die) but ſhall appear in the Body with them; and with them ſhall meet the LORD, and be for ever with him.

This Globe was never ſo populous, as it will be on that great Day of Aſſiſe; when all the Sons of ADAM, who lived in ever ſo diſtant Ages, will appear together in the Fleſh, and be Cotemporaries. Compared to this, every Aſſembly of Men recorded in Hiſtory, appears contemptible; even the Hoſt of XERXES is loſt in the Croud. And yet numerous as it will be, every Individual will be ſtrictly examined, and receive the moſt exact Juſtice. This will not be like Human Tribunals, where Actions only can be weighed, and Truth may be concealed. Before this Tribunal the Truth muſt appear: it hath Cogniſance of Mens Thoughts as well as Actions: to the

Judge

Judge all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from him no Secrets can be hid.

When the Prince of the Kings of the Earth is thus seated in the Clouds in Power and great Glory to judge the whole Circuit of it; the Earth revolving on it's Axis shall present every Kingdom, Nation and Language in their turn at the Foot of his Throne, to receive their Trial and their Sentence. Those that lived under the Gospel shall be tried by the Gospel; those that lived under the Law, by the Law; and those that lived without either Law or Gospel, by (what was a Law to them) such Lights as their Reason afforded; for GOD is not hard, reaping where he hath not sown, and gathering where he hath not strawen. Now shall the Distinction be made between the Seed that fell on good and that which fell on bad Ground: between the Wheat and the Tares: between the

wise

wiſe Virgins with Oyl in their Lamps, and the fooliſh who had none: between the Servants, who improved their Talents, and thoſe who did not: between thoſe who relieved the Hungry, Thirſty, Stranger, Naked, and Priſoner, and thoſe who did not: between thoſe whom the LORD ſhall find doing his Will, and thoſe whom he ſhall find ſleeping, ſmiting their Fellow-ſervants, or eating and drinking with the Drunken.

The Trial ended, the glorious Judge ſhall ſeparate Perſons ſo different in Merit, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats; and he ſhall ſet the Sheep on his Right-hand, and the Goats on the Left; and then he will pronounce this Sentence. He ſhall ſay unto the firſt, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. And unto the laſt he ſhall ſay, Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil

Devil and his Angels. And these shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.

But previous to the Execution of the Sentence, both must undergo a very great Change on this Globe, before they quit it for ever. They must both depositе their mortal Bodies in their native Soil, before they step into Eternity. But how extremely different will be their Exit! This is that important Crisis foretold by JOHN the Baptist, when CHRIST will thoroughly cleanse his Floor; gather the Wheat into his Garner; but burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. The Righteous shall be changed in an Instant, in the twinkling of an Eye: they shall leave their mortal, corruptible, and natural, for immortal, incorruptible, and spiritual Bodies: they shall be caught up to meet their LORD in the Air, and be for ever with him: no longer terrestrial, but etherial Beings; no longer Men, but

Angels;

Angels; a glorious Society, with CHRIST at their Head: who (as ſaith the Evangeliſt) ſhall ſhine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. But how dreadful will be the Exit and Cataſtrophe of the Wicked! Far from quitting the Body with Pleaſure, like the Righteous, and aſcending with them to meet the LORD, they will be left on Earth to periſh as Malefactors in the Flames, which will conſume both them and all the Furniture of this Globe, which will be their Funeral Pile. They are the Tares, which at the End of this World, which is the Harveſt, the Angels, who are the Reapers, ſhall gather and burn in the Fire: for the Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a Furnace of Fire, there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth. In this Day of the LORD, ſaith St. PETER, the

the Elements ſhall melt with Heat, and the Earth, with the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up.

How awfull, how tremendous will be the Scene! when the Ether agitated in the Air, and in the Entrails of the Earth, ſhall burſt forth in Lightnings and Vulcanos, whoſe Flames ſeizing on every Combuſtible ſhall ſpread over the Face of the whole Globe. Then ſhall the Elements melt with fervent Heat: the watry Tribe ſhall expire in a boiling Ocean; the Aerial in Clouds of Smoke: the Cave or Foreſt ſhall be no Refuge to the wild Beaſts; nor Houſe, nor City to offending Man: both ſhall periſh with their Habitations. All the Works of Nature and of Art will be involved in one common Ruin. Where is the proud Pyramid, whoſe wide Foundation was thought ſolid as the Earth, and whoſe Point invaded the Skies? where the Triumphal Arch? the aſpiring Column and Obeliſk?

Obelisk? the *Cloud-capt Tower*? the *Gorgeous Palace*? the *Solemn Temple*? Every Monument of Man's Vanity, Pride and Ambition, of his Superstition, and even of his Piety, shall fail; and their Place shall no where be found. All Records of History shall cease: the Glory of the greatest Empires shall vanish: and it shall no longer be known on Earth, that there were such Men as ALEXANDER and CÆSAR, or such Cities as Babylon and Rome. Fame shall die; and Oblivion reign in her Stead. On this solemn and final Day, the great wicked Man will have before his Eyes these Monuments of his Pride; and when he is perishing with them will blush to think, that he set his Affections on things so trifling and transitory: he will wish his Name had been unknown: and when his Memory ceases on Earth, that it might cease too in his own Conscience.

When

When Man has finally quitted this Globe, the future State and Condition of it is not the Concern of Man. Whether GOD in his Wisdom may suffer it to lie fallow for a Season; or after thus fertilizing it with the Flames, will immediately repleniſh the Face of it. It is of much more Importance to consider the future State and Condition of Man; When the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal.

1. As to the Wicked. After their Bodies are consumed in the general Conflagration, their Souls will mix with other Evil Spirits. From Men they will become Devils: be associated with the Devil and his Angels: and be cast into the everlasting Fire prepared for them: where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched. This Worm and Fire are metaphorical, not material. A material Worm could not live in a material Fire:

A material Fire could not affect an immaterial Subſtance like the Soul; which eſcaped from ſuch a Fire, when the Body was conſumed at the general Conflagration. The Worm that never dies is Conſcience. The Fire (i. e. Torment) which is never quenched (i. e. never ceaſes) are uneaſy Paſſions and Affections, Thoughts, and Reflections, Ideas and Imaginations: All which attended with Anxiety, Anguiſh, Terror, Horror, Remorſe, and Deſpair, compoſe a Hell in the Soul of a wicked Man. The Soul is not ſo properly ſpeaking in Hell, as Hell in the Soul. Wherever the Spirit of a wicked Man ſhall be, there will be Hell: whether it pleaſe GOD to confine it to any one particular Part of Space, or ſuffer it to wander through every Part of it. It carries Hell with it: and it is with Juſtice MILTON makes Satan ſay, that he himſelf is Hell; and that he can fly from Hell no more than from himſelf. Divines have

vainly diſputed about the Place of Hell, as if it were neceſſarily Local. Poets have deſcribed it as ſuch, in the fineſt Allegories, and the moſt beautiful Colours of Imagination: and have divided it into ſeveral Apartments for the different Degrees of Guilt. But ſuch Lodgings are unneceſſary: each guilty Perſon carries about him a Hell, and a Puniſhment exactly proportioned to his Crime: for it would be inconſiſtent with the Juſtice of GOD to puniſh all Crimes alike. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Jeruſalem: for the Offenders againſt Man, than for the Atheiſt, Idolater, and Blaſphemer, who have directly affronted GOD: for petty Treſpaſſers againſt their Neighbours, than for the Tyrant, Murderer, and Adulterer: for thoſe who have neglected their Duty, than thoſe who have wilfully tranſgreſſed it: for thoſe who had ſome mixture of Good with their Evil, than thoſe who

have none: for certainly the leaſt vicious Man and the leaſt virtuous, will not be very diſtant in Condition: nor the Gates of Heaven and Hell ſo remote, as is commonly imagined. One ſort of Puniſhment will be common to all the Wicked, viz. to ſee the Righteous in ABRAHAM's Boſom, in a State of Bliſs, to which they cannot arrive: to deplore the loſs of that Bliſs by an ill-ſpent Life: to wiſh they had never been; or might ceaſe to be, if they may not be releaſed from that Place of Torment. But whether they ever will be, GOD only knows. If after Ages of Torment, of his infinite Mercy he ſhould releaſe them; we can ſcarce imagine they would be immediately advanced to a happy State: the beſt to be expected would be a new State of Probation.

2. Let us now change the Scene to Heaven; that Region of the Bleſſed; where are Joys for evermore; ſuch as

Eye

Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. This happy Region is confined to no particular Place; it extends to all Nature. The Spirits of Men are finite, and conſequently muſt be in ſome particular Part of Space. They muſt be ſomewhere, but may be any where: and as the Spirit of a righteous Man muſt be happy in all Places; therefore wherever it goes, Heaven attends him. Wherever GOD pleaſes at any time more particularly to manifeſt his Glories or his Terrors, thoſe Places during that time are more peculiarly Heaven or Hell, which he can change and remove at Pleaſure. We are ſure, that our Heaven will be with CHRIST. He is at the Right Hand of GOD, that is, in great Glory. We ſhall follow where he is gone before; to thoſe Manſions which he is preparing for us. For in his Father's Houſe are many Manſions, that is, different degrees

of Reward: for GOD, who weighs the minuteſt Actions, will reward every Man according to his Works. It is not every one ſhall ſit on Thrones like the Apoſtles, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael: or be ranked with the goodly Fellowſhip of the Apoſtles, or the noble Army of Martyrs. Many ſhall be admitted within the Suburbs of the New Jeruſalem, who ſhall not approach him, who ſitteth on the Throne: but when the four and twenty Elders fall down to worſhip him and the Lamb, the whole Circuit of Men and Angels, after their Example, ſhall fall proſtrate in Adoration. This is that Heaven of Heavens, which CHRIST himſelf revealed to his beloved Diſciple in Patmos, in Types and Figures, to give Mankind ſome previous Idea of the very glorious State, to which the Righteous ſhould be exalted. And when they ſhall at any time remove to a greater Diſtance from the Throne of his Glory;

and

and go as his Ambaſſadors to the different Quarters of Nature, they will not want their Heaven. They will find it every where in a Soul, purged from impure Paſſions and Affections, which they found ſo difficult to reſtrain here below. They will find it in the Reflection on a Life well ſpent, which was a Comfort to them whilſt they only expected a State of Happineſs, and muſt be infinitely greater when they enjoy it. They will find it alſo in the Enlargement of their Powers and Capacities, which will make ample Amends for their Weakneſs and Defects in this Life.

Thoſe Spirits clad in glorified Bodies of an Etherial Subſtance will paſs with eaſe through the Etherial Spaces: quick as the ſame Ether darts in the Lightnings; or paſſes to the Planets from the Sun. They may then viſit in Perſon thoſe Parts of Nature, which they could only reach here in Imagination. Their former Thirſt

after Knowledge will be ſatisfied: their Curioſity gratified: their Doubts cleared up: their Errors detected: the Relation, Dependence, Connection, and Harmony of things will be diſcovered; as well as the Means and Manner of their Operation: Cauſes, as well as Effects, will appear: and it will be known, in what Caſes GOD (the firſt Cauſe) acts immediately; and in what he uſes other Beings as the Inſtruments of his Operations. They will then be acquainted with the Nature of Place, of Space, and Infinity: of Time, Duration, and Eternity: of Spirit, and its Union with, and the Means and Manner of its Operation on Matter: of Matter, and its Elements, which compoſe all Bodies: of all Bodies, their Structure, Magnitude, Forms, and Motion: of Comets (which perhaps may paſs into different neighbouring Syſtems): of thoſe Suns, which each illuminates its Planetary Syſtem: of the Planets in each

each Syſtem: and of the Furniture and Inhabitants of each Planet: and after admiring the Wiſdom of GOD in the wonderful Structure of the Univerſe, they will join the great Chorus of Heaven in ſaying: "Thou art worthy, O LORD, "to receive Glory and Honour and "Power; for thou haſt created all things, "and for thy Pleaſure they are and were "created."

Such may and probably will be a Part of the glorious State of thoſe, who adhere to the Precepts and follow the Example of CHRIST. But how fatally have Mankind deviated from both! He very truly foretold, that he hath not ſent Peace but a Sword. The beſt Religion hath been perverted to the worſt Purpoſes. It hath been uſed as an Engine of Slavery inſtead of Freedom; and of the Deſtruction inſtead of the Salvation of Mankind.

As AARON ſet up the Golden Calf in the Wilderneſs: the Chriſtian High Prieſts have ſet up many of their own Inventions as the Objects of Veneration: and required many things to be obſerved not required by Scripture. They have eſtabliſhed the Opinions of weak, wicked, ambitious, fallible, Men, as the Doctrines of CHRIST. Have impoſed fooliſh, abſurd, ridiculous, ſuperſtitious, idolatrous Ceremonies, as neceſſary. All from Motives of Ignorance, Ambition, or Intereſt; with a Cruelty and Zeal inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity or Humanity. True Chriſtianity almoſt ceaſed in each Country, as ſoon as the Government became Chriſtian. And as before that time, true Chriſtians ſuffered Perſecution, as their LORD and MASTER did; after that time, the falſe ones deſerting his Precepts and Example turned Perſecutors themſelves. What Diſputes, what Quarrels, what Murders, what Maſſacres,

ſacres, have been cauſed among Chriſtians on frivolous Queſtions, that not only a Man of Senſe, but even a Child would be aſhamed of! and proſecuted with Zeal, as if eſſential to Salvation! and out of the ſame Zeal often impiouſly declared to be ſo! and the greateſt Sinners have been eſteemed Saints for eſpouſing them! There is ſcarce a Tenet, or ſcarce an external Ceremony of Chriſtianity, but hath been the Subject of ſome Diſpute.

I have before obſerved; there are but two Performances, in their own Nature indifferent, required by CHRIST of his Followers, as outward and viſible Marks of their Profeſſion, viz. Baptiſm and his Supper. Very eaſy Performances! and yet they have afforded matter of much Diſpute. It hath been diſputed, whether Baptiſm may be adminiſtered by Women as well as Men: by Laymen as well as Clergy: to Children as well as adult: by Aſperſion or Immerſion: in public or private:

private: in a Houſe, a Church, or a River. Whether valid, if any of the Ceremonies are wanting in the Performance: and whether fatal if the whole is omitted; even to Infants who could not help it. Strange Diſputations! Do the Diſputants imagine Baptiſm a phyſical Means of conveying Grace and Salvation? and that they flow, as by a Canal, through the Water and Fingers of thoſe who adminiſter it? If they do; they are as bad Philoſophers as Divines. If they conſider it (as they ought to do) only as a Condition to entitle us to GOD's Favour; do they think GOD unjuſt, to require the Performance of it by Infants and others not able to perform it? or to puniſh them for the Omiſſion? Or if Baptiſm is performed; do not they think (as they ought) that GOD accepts the Will for the Deed? Or do they think, that he, like vain Man, is pleaſed with a Ceremonial? or angry, if any Circumſtance of it is omitted?

And

And are they preſumptuous enough from thence to determine the future State of Man, and the Purpoſe of GOD?

There have been as many frivolous Diſputes about the LORD's Supper. As, where the Table ſhould be placed: whether it ſhould be called literally a Table, or figuratively an Altar: whether it ſhould be received ſitting or kneeling; whether in leavened or unleavened Bread: whether in Wine, or Wine mixed with Water: whether in one or both Kinds: or whether alike by Clergy and Laity: and by whom or to whom it may be adminiſtered. Can any Man refuſe to adminiſter it to another on pretence of Unworthineſs, without arrogating to himſelf the Prerogative of GOD, of knowing the Heart? Or can any one, to whom it is refuſed, be weak enough to be uneaſy from the Apprehenſion of any ill Conſequence to reſult from the Refuſal? Does he not know that GOD accepts the Will for

for the Deed? that he puniſhes only for voluntary, not forced Omiſſion; for the Man's own Fault, and not that of another? Human Excommunications are but airy Phantoms in their Nature; tho' they have been found uſeful Engines of worldly Power and Intereſt. And when exerted in ignorant Times, have had Influence enough on weak and prejudiced Minds, to produce the moſt horrid Riots, Murders, Seditions, Rebellions, and Calamities. The ſame may be ſaid of the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation: abſurd and blaſphemous: which wants no Confutation; and deſerves only Contempt. And the Belief of it ſo long amongſt ſuch Numbers is an Infatuation to be regarded as an Inſtance of GOD's immediate Vengeance for the Abuſe of his Religion; and is a Proof, that any Abſurdity may be inculcated into the Mind of Man; and that the Prejudice of Education can triumph

triumph over the united Force both of his Senſes and his Reaſon.

CHRIST preſcribed no particular Forms of Public Worſhip or of Government in his Church: but left both (as the Forms of Civil Government are left) to the Choice of every Society. It is ſufficient, that things are done decently and in Order: for as Ceremonies are not eſſential, the ſame Ceremony is not neceſſary. There muſt be ſome. Men cannot aſſemble to ſerve GOD, without ſome Time or Place appointed for their Meeting: without obſerving ſome Form, when met: and without having ſome Perſons among them to officiate.

1. As to the Place. GOD is equally preſent in all Places; and CHRIST and his Apoſtles preached and prayed in all alike. The Primitive Chriſtians were under Perſecution; and could have none ſet apart by the State. When the Emperors became Chriſtian, Heathen Temples

ples were converted to Churches, and falſe Gods gave way to the true. It was not long, before Idols were replaced in Churches, by thoſe who called themſelves Chriſtians; nay, in ſome perhaps the very ſame Idol which had been removed from thence was reſtored to the ſame Place: and was to repreſent ſome Saint, often a worſe Perſon than the God, whom he ſupplanted, and whoſe Worſhip he uſurped: for in the Heathen World Men were raiſed to divine Honours for ſignal Services to Mankind; which are not always the Terms of Canonization. Thus the ſame Places were reſtored to Idolatry, which had before been reſcued from it. And as Saints (like the Heathen Gods) were Men, and could not be preſent every where; the People were taught to believe them more peculiarly preſent where their Image was. That was the Place of Miracles: the Statue was often animated: it rolled the Eye:

Eye: it nodded: it ſpoke: it told Fortunes: it took particular Men or Profeſſions under its Protection: it had Relicks and Noſtrums to cure particular Diſeaſes both of Body and Mind. This drew together great Numbers of People; which brought no ſmall Gain to the Prieſthood, and to the Place; which made both cry out, like thoſe of Epheſus, "Great is DIANA of the Epheſi-"ans."—The Opinion of a local Preſence of Heathen Gods in Temples, and of Romiſh Saints in Churches, made way for a falſe Belief, that GOD himſelf was more peculiarly preſent there: that the Place acquired (I know not what) Holineſs by the Ceremony of Conſecration: that before it, it was no Church; and that after it, it ought never to be turned to any other uſe.—But GOD dwells not in Temples made with Hands. He is Omnipreſent: and tho' for great Purpoſes he hath ſometimes manifeſted his Preſence by outward

outward Signs in particular Places; yet he was not then more preſent in thoſe Places than in others; nor have they acquired ſince any particular Sanctity. He manifeſted himſelf by Fire to MOSES, when he ſent him to deliver his People: to that People he manifeſted himſelf by Thunder and Lightning and a Voice, at the Delivery of the Law: in a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by Night, over the Tabernacle in the Wilderneſs: by Fire on the Altar on the Dedication of SOLOMON's Temple: by cloven Tongues to the Apoſtles on ſending the HOLY GHOST. But the particular Spots of Earth on which all thoſe great Events happened are now unknown or diſregarded. And it is abſurd to imagine, that when ſuch Acts of the Deity gave no particular Sanctity to a Place, that any Act of Man can do it. An Edifice, or the Ground on which it ſtands, is not capable of ſuch an Impreſſion: the Heart of Man only

only is. Where two or three are gathered together in GOD's Name, there is a Congregation; and where a Congregation is, there is the Church. The Walls are not a Church: nor can any particular Place be always appropriated and ſecured to the ſame Uſe. Conveniency may alter it: Time certainly will. Conſecration of a Church therefore, in the moſt rational Senſe, is only a Publication, that that Place is deſigned for the People to meet in to ſerve GOD; with a Prayer, that they may ſerve him there in Spirit, and in Truth. It was this imaginary Sanctity of Place, that formerly ſent the Princes of Chriſtendom on Expeditions to Paleſtine, which coſt Millions of Money, and of Lives: and that hath ſince ſent immenſe Treaſure in Preſents to LORETTO; of no uſe to the Lady there; and which, we may believe Popes have been too wiſe to ſuffer to remain there uſeleſs.

2. As to the Time. It is neceſſary to have ſtated Times as well as Places of public Worſhip: that Congregations may know when as well as where to meet. The Chriſtians, in imitation of the Jews, and in compliance with the fourth Commandment, have rationally ſet apart one Day in ſeven for that purpoſe. But they changed it from the ſeventh, eſtabliſhed by MOSES to remind Man of his Creation, to the firſt of the Week, on which CHRIST roſe from the Dead, to remind him of that great Proof of his Redemption. And to imprint ſo memorable an Event ſtill ſtronger on Mens Minds, the Reſurrection of CHRIST is celebrated once a Year with more Solemnity, as his Birth, Paſſion, and Aſcenſion likewiſe are. Theſe Things are very rational to be done; but may be ordered to be performed as well at one Seaſon as another, and nothing could be weaker than the Ancient and Unchriſtian Diſpute about

the

the Time of the Celebration of Easter; and the endeavouring to fix an invariable universal Rule for it. It is impossible in Nature. Nature hath not divided the Earth's annual Course precisely into Days, but hath left a Fraction; which (as is well known) in process of Time varied the Rule from the original Intention. Nature hath also distributed the same Point of Time into different Seasons on different Parts of the Globe. Men cannot celebrate Easter all together at the same Point of Time: they must vary either in the Day or the Season of the Year. When it is Day in our Hemisphere, it is Night in the other: and half Mankind will be in Bed whilst others are at Church. Whilst it is Spring in one Hemisphere it is Autumn in the other. Therefore if they keep Easter at the same Time, it will be at different Seasons of the Year; if at the same Season of the Year, it must be at different and

oppoſite Times. And what Rule muſt be obſerved within the Polar Circles? where Days are reckoned by Months, and not Months by Weeks and Days: they certainly cannot celebrate Eaſter there the firſt Sunday after the full Moon after the 21ſt of March. It is amazing to reflect on the Zeal ſhewn formerly on this Occaſion; and that Men could be induced to think, that GOD would not accept their reaſonable Service, as well at one Seaſon of the Year as another, and at all Times alike. But it was lucky, that whilſt they were labouring to fix a Point of no Importance in Divinity, they improved themſelves in Aſtronomy and Chronology.—Not content with ſetting apart thoſe Days in Commemoration of CHRIST, Chriſtians ſoon appointed others in Memory of his Diſciples. This might be reaſonable, to remind them of the Lives and Examples of thoſe holy and inſpired Perſons. But the Popes did not

ſtop

ſtop here: they took upon them the Prerogative of GOD in judging Man's Heart, and declaring Saints whom ſoever they pleaſed. Every Zealot for their uſurped Power was canonized, tho' the meaneſt or moſt wicked of Men. The Calendar was not able to contain them. Every Day had more than one. A Man, who obſerved thoſe Days, could not carry on the neceſſary Buſineſs of Life; but was rendered an uſeleſs Member of Society. And how are theſe Days celebrated? A Holiday is not a holy Day, but a Day of Debauchery; not of Religion, but of Vice: ſo that one nominal Saint makes thouſands of real Sinners.

3. As to the Form. When Men are met at a certain Time and Place for public Worſhip, they muſt neceſſarily uſe ſome Form of Words, and of Ceremonies in performing it. What theſe Forms ſhould be is not directed in Scripture. It is impoſſible it ſhould, ſince Modes of

Speech and Behaviour are very different in different Places, and ever varying with Time in the ſame Place. It is ſufficient if the Words are intelligible, and the Senſe agreeable to Reaſon and Scripture: and if the outward Geſture and Behaviour be ſuch, as by the Faſhion of the Place denote Decency and Reſpect. Under theſe Qualifications every People is at liberty to chuſe their own Form; and every Government, for the Sake of Order, ought to eſtabliſh ſome Form for their Uſe. This every Government ought to propoſe, no Government ought to impoſe; but ſhould leave to every Man the Chriſtian Liberty of worſhipping GOD in any other Way he likes better, provided he diſturbs not the Peace of the Society. Forms and Ceremonies, being in their own Nature indifferent, are only the Dreſs of Religion, the Mode of which every Government may both eſtabliſh and alter at Pleaſure. The moſt rational

Forms

Forms are thoſe which have the feweſt Ceremonies; as they are the leaſt burthenſome, and are moſt agreeable to that Liberty and Simplicity which CHRIST intended to eſtabliſh. It is wiſe in a Government to eſtabliſh ſuch a Form of Worſhip as is agreeable to the Inclinations of the Majority; and not to alter it without their Conſent. It is weak in Individuals not to comply with the Form of the Country where they happen to reſide, if it requires nothing which they think ſinful. Could one have imagined, that Men could have been ſo far infatuated, as to regard theſe Forms as eſſential? but ſo they have been generally taught, and ſo they believe. Nay, they generally believe them to be moſt eſſential. Mention the Word RELIGION, the firſt Idea that ariſes in their Minds is concerning theſe Forms. By the Religion of England, Scotland, Sweden, France, Geneva, Rome, &c. they mean the par-

ticular Forms eſtabliſhed by Law in each. Thus the Word RELIGION is perverted, and inſtead of being applied to the Belief and Practice of the Goſpel in general, in which it conſiſts, is only applied to the particular Modes of public Worſhip in each Country, which are in themſelves indifferent. Nay, ſo zealous have Men been for theſe laſt, that, in Support of their own Modes they have violated not only all Principles of good Policy, but even of Chriſtianity and Humanity. But by this blind Zeal they have ſeldom gained their End, which is better and more certainly obtained by Indulgence; for if Men are left to themſelves, they will naturally fall into the Faſhion. None of theſe outward Forms will either make or unmake a Chriſtian. The only true Chriſtian is he, who with a benevolent Temper, and ſincere Diſpoſition, conforms himſelf to the beſt of his Underſtanding

ſtanding to the moral and general Rules of the Goſpel.

4. As to the Perſons to officiate. When Chriſtians are met at particular Times and Places to perform their public Worſhip, whatever the Form is, the Act to be performed muſt be either Prayer, Praiſe or Thankſgiving to GOD, adminiſtering CHRIST's Sacraments, or hearing the Scriptures read or explained. In the Performance of theſe Acts, it is very convenient, for the Sake of Order, that there ſhould be particular Perſons appointed to lead the Way in them, and to be the Inſtruments of conveying Inſtruction to the Ears and Hearts of the Congregation. If it was not ſo, all might be ſilent, and neither Speakers nor Hearers: or elſe all might be Speakers and no Hearers. Therefore from the Time of CHRIST, to the preſent, particular Perſons have been conſtantly appointed for thoſe Functions. CHRIST firſt inſtruct-

ed

ed and ſent forth his Diſciples, and they others. And at firſt it could not be otherwiſe; for then there were no others that knew the Will of their Maſter. But after the Publication of the Goſpel, when the Scriptures were in every Hand, all Perſons of equal Capacity were equally able to inſtruct both themſelves and others: and there was no Neceſſity immutably to appropriate the Performance of theſe Acts to particular Individuals, which all Chriſtians were equally able to perform. Nor is there any Command or Injunction in Scripture for ſuch a perſonal Diſtinction amongſt them. But what was at firſt neceſſary was afterwards thought convenient; and a particular Set of Men have ever ſince been appointed to theſe Functions. Before Governments became Chriſtian, theſe Men could not be appointed by the State; but muſt have been appointed by one another; either by Election of their reſpec-

tive Congregations, or by Nomination of the Perſons before appointed, or by both theſe Ways concurring and confirming each other. But ſuch Appointment could give no Authority to one Chriſtian over another. All that they could do was, to exhort others to follow their Directions, and to exclude them from their Society, if they did not. Temporal Power they had none, nor could have, either from CHRIST, or from the State; the firſt had diſclaimed it, declaring his Kingdom not of this World; and no Government was yet Chriſtian. And therefore whatever temporal Power the Clergy have at any time poſſeſſed in any Country, they muſt have acquired it, either by Grant from the State, or by Uſurpation; the Pretence of a Divine Right to Power or Poſſeſſions being as ſcandalous as groundleſs.

When Princes became Converts, they were zealous for their new Faith, and liberal

liberal to their Inſtructors. They gave them earthly for their heavenly things: and thoſe Inſtructors were glad of the Exchange. But after taſting the Sweets of Wealth and Power, they were unwilling to hold them upon ſo precarious a Tenure as the Pleaſure of the State. What they at firſt received as a Favour, they ſoon inſiſted upon as a Right: and founded that Right on their own arbitrary Interpretation of Scripture; which they made a Warrant for whatever they liſted; and made Excommunication, (which they endeavoured to perſuade the World was always followed by Damnation) as the Penalty for every Non-compliance. Credulous Men were eaſily impoſed upon, and terrified with big Words. The Clergy gained an Aſcendant over Mens Conſciences; and by that a temporal Power too ſtrong for the State. Princes were often forced to be Slaves to their own Subjects; who pretended to derive

derive a Power from Scripture, independent of theirs, and ſuperior to it.

When Governments declared for Chriſtianity, the ſame Perſons continued to officiate, and the ſame Orders of Men remained among them as before. In the Exerciſe of their Functions, they were confined to particular Diſtricts; but the Perſons who were to exerciſe them were appointed (or ordained) by one another, as before. This, as I ſaid before, was not neceſſary, nor commanded in Scripture; but might be thought convenient: nor was it eaſy to foreſee all the Conſequences, which have ſince proved ſo inconvenient to the State. It was a Mark of Diſtinction, which afforded them an opportunity of ſetting themſelves up as a Body of Men of a different Species from other Chriſtians, and of aſſuming an Authority and Juriſdiction over them. As Miniſters had been ſo appointed from the Times of the Apoſtles, it was more

eaſy

eaſy to perſuade the World, that they muſt always be ſo appointed, and could not be otherwiſe. That the Perſons ſo appointed, and no other (even though elected by their Congregation, or nominated by the State) had a right to exerciſe thoſe Functions. That it was a Divine Right, which they alone derived to themſelves in Succeſſion from CHRIST and his Diſciples; and which they alone could tranſmit in Succeſſion to Men of the ſame Order. That ſuch Orders of Men had a Divine Right to Power, and were eſſentially neceſſary to the very Being of a Church: and that one Link broke in the Chain of their Succeſſion might endanger the future State of Mankind. Thus they eſtabliſhed themſelves into a Corporation, diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of their Fellow Subjects, by the moſt extenſive and excluſive Powers and Juriſdictions: yet it is difficult to produce Paſſages from Scripture amounting to a Grant of a perpetual,

petual, perſonal, ſucceſſive, and excluſive Charter.

Being in poſſeſſion of appointing one another, and of performing particular Acts, they made it a Pretence to aſſume the magnificent Titles of Ambaſſadors of CHRIST and Succeſſors of the Apoſtles; and as ſuch to claim a Power, Authority, and Reſpect, anſwerable to thoſe Titles.

They were not like the Ambaſſadors of an earthly Prince; but their Character was indelible, and their Power was inſeparable from it. Their Perſons ſacred and inviolable: not amenable to civil Courts, but to be judged by themſelves alone. Their Poſſeſſions holy and unalienable; and held by a Divine Tenure; for being holy themſelves, every thing they laid Hands on become ſo. When they appointed others to the Miniſtry by Impoſition of Hands, they talked of it in a Stile, as if the Spirit or Grace of

GOD

GOD was not his immediate Gift, but was capable of a material Conveyance to the Soul; and that they were the Phyſical Inſtruments and ſole Canals by which it could paſs to Perſons ordained, and from them to the reſt of Mankind: and as if the bare Ceremony of Ordination gave a Man a reſpectable Character, which is to be acquired only by an orderly Life.

As Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, they laid no Claim to ſucceed them in their Labours, their Virtues, and their Sufferings; but in Power and Authority, which the Apoſtles themſelves never claimed.

The Apoſtles had a Power of caſting out Devils, and of working other Miracles. This Power was Perſonal; but yet it hath been often claimed by theſe pretended Succeſſors, to ſtrike Mankind with Awe and Veneration. In dark and ignorant Ages they impoſed numberleſs Forgeries upon them; which being diſcovered

covered in more enlightened Times, have not only brought the Contrivers to Shame and Contempt; but made Men doubt of the Truth of Chriſtianity itſelf, when they found ſuch baſe Artifices uſed to ſupport it.

The Apoſtles did not deſire to be diſtinguiſhed from the other Followers of their Maſter; claimed no peculiar Privileges, or any Superiority over them; humbling, not exalting themſelves; and complying with others, not exacting Obedience from them. They pretended to no Sacredneſs of Perſon; or that the Divine Grace ſhould be conveyed from them in Succeſſion by a particular Set of Men excluſive of other Chriſtians; and if ſuch Succeſſion ſhould be interrupted, many Acts could not be performed that are neceſſary to Salvation. Theſe were the Pretences of more modern Divines, to make themſelves neceſſary and reſpected.

Neither the Apoſtles or their Maſter left Directions in what manner the Church was for ever to be governed: much leſs did they ſay, that Epiſcopacy, Preſbytery, or any other Form, was of Divine Right. They left the particular Form of the Government of each Church to the Society or State to which it belonged; no more requiring a Uniformity in that, than in the civil Government of States. As Civil Governments all differ according to Time, Place, and Occaſion; ſo muſt Eccleſiaſtical: and as the firſt agree in ſome fundamental Principles; ſo muſt the laſt: the chief of which is, that CHRIST was a Prophet ſent by GOD to inſtruct Mankind; and that he died and roſe again to confirm the Truth of his Doctrine.

The Apoſtles claimed no worldly Poſſeſſions, much leſs a Divine Right to Tythes. They claimed no worldly Power, much leſs a Right to diſpoſe of Kingdoms.

doms. They arrogated not to themſelves the Prerogative of GOD, either of judging of Mens Hearts, by canonizing them for Saints, or by anathematizing them for Sinners; or of forgiving Sinners by Pardons and Indulgences. Could they have imagined, that their pretended Succeſſors would blaſphemouſly apply theſe blaſphemous Claims to ſanctify ſome for promoting, and to curſe others for oppoſing their Deſigns? That from being the Miniſters of GOD's Word, they ſhould claim to be the Sole Interpreters of it, and make it ſpeak their own Language to gain Obedience to themſelves? Or that from being Miniſters of his Sacraments, they ſhould take poſſeſſion of the Gates of Heaven and of Hell, by perſuading Men that the receiving them from their Hands was neceſſary to Salvation; and by giving or refuſing them to what Perſons they pleaſed? Excommunication formerly carried a Terror that few could

withſtand, looking on it as a certain Earneſt and Prelude of Damnation: and it was the moſt powerful Engine in the Hands of the Clergy to bring about all their Purpoſes; by this they were able to triumph over Rivals, to deſtroy Heretics, and dethrone Princes. Are we to lament, that it has now loſt its Force?

The Apoſtles did all in their Power to make known the Will of their Maſter: they taught all Nations; and preached and publiſhed the Goſpel to every Creature. Their pretended Succeſſors have endeavoured to keep it to themſelves; to conceal it in a Language unknown; and deliver out to the Vulgar ſuch Parts only as they judge proper, in their own Senſe and Interpretation.

Is it known, or is it probable, that the Apoſtles ever compoſed a Creed, although there is one, which goes under their Name? They certainly did not compoſe it in the preciſe Terms in which we now have

have it. Or if thoſe inſpired Perſons did compoſe it, is it not ſufficient? Or ſhall any Mortal preſume to compoſe, and (what is ſtill more) to impoſe another after it? Yet their pretended Succeſſors have compoſed many: and the more they have compoſed, the more they have confounded and divided Mankind. Were they to publiſh many more, they might make moſt Points of Chriſtianity incredible. A Man ſcarce deſerves the Name of a Chriſtian, that could entirely believe all thoſe already extant.

The Apoſtles were contented with the Scriptures in the Form and Words, in which they received them from their Maſter and the Holy Spirit: they attempted not to impoſe their own Opinions on the World; much leſs to eſtabliſh them as Articles of Faith. Their pretended Succeſſors have been of a more dictating and dogmatical Spirit. They have called themſelves the Church, and

under that Title claimed a Right to determine every Doctrine. Some things they have decided, which CHRIST never taught; ſome which he left undecided and free to every Man's Opinion; ſome impoſſible to be known; ſome too frivolous or even ridiculous to be examined; and ſome not things in Nature but only their own Chimeras. To theſe Deciſions they have required an implicit Faith, and a Submiſſion without Reſerve; inſiſting that others ſhould declare an unfeigned Aſſent to them, or openly ſubſcribe them: endeavouring to terrify ſuch as refuſed with opprobrious Names, Curſes, and Excommunications; and (what is worſe) purſuing them with Baniſhment, Fine, Impriſonment, Fire and Faggot; and acting as Subſtitutes of Satan in torturing Mankind.

Thoſe Things which CHRIST left myſterious, his Apoſtles attempted not to

to explain, patiently waiting for a more full Revelation of them in a future State. Their pretended Succeſſors, more poſitive and preſumptuous, have magiſterially explained them all. The Divine Eſſence is incomprehenſible to weak and mortal Man: yet they have undertaken to demonſtrate, how the three Perſons of the Trinity exiſt in it; and have wrangled, and in turns have perſecuted each other for many Centuries about it. Witneſs [a]SABELLIUS, who denied the Exiſtence of the SON and HOLY GHOST, aſſerting them to be only Qualities of the Godhead: and [b]MACEDONIUS, who denied the Divinity of the HOLY GHOST only. Witneſs [c]ARIUS, who denied the Eternity of the SON; and SOCINUS, who denied his Divinity. The ſame may be ſaid of their endeavouring to explain the Manner of

[a] Vid. BOWER's Hiſt. of the Popes, Vol. I. p. 75.
[b] Ibid. p. 172.
[c] Ibid. from p. 158. to 167.

CHRIST's Union to the Godhead. [a] NESTORIUS and his Followers maintaining two Perſons and two Natures in CHRIST; and [b] EUTYCHES and his only one Perſon and one Nature. They murdered each other in Defence of theſe Opinions: and the Followers of ATHANASIUS, endeavouring to ſet them right, have damned all Mankind, who do not come into theirs. Some have doubted whether our Saviour had a human Soul; and others whether he had a Body. And others have diſputed where his Soul was between his Death and Reſurrection; and where his Body is ſince his Aſcenſion. Vain Enquiries, and of no Importance!

Thoſe pretended Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, not content with explaining Myſteries, have made Myſteries of Things very plain. The Sacraments, the Conditions of GOD's Grace, they repreſented

[a] Ibid. from p. 386. to 405.
[b] Vol. II. from p. 30. to 64.—Vid. p. 306, 339.

as

as the phyſical Means of conveying it; and that they could be effectually adminiſter'd only by themſelves; and not even by themſelves if not orthodox. Many have been ſo abſurd, as to make Metaphor a Reality; and to maintain, that when CHRIST called Bread his Body, he turned it into Fleſh: as every Roman Catholic Prieſt has done ſince: ſo that when the conſecrated Wafer is taken into the Mouth, if their Interpretation be true, the Congregation are Canibals.

How many Conceits have they entertained concerning the State of Man, both at his Creation, and after his Death! The Account which MOSES gives of his Creation, and adapted to vulgar Capacities, and the allegorical Account which he gives of his Fall, they have taken in a literal Senſe; which hath led them into a Labyrinth of ridiculous Abſurdities: which I before hinted, and which have been ſufficiently

expoſed

expoſed by Men of great [f] Learning and Abilities.

Having thus introduced Man upon the Stage, let us hear how they have diſpoſed of him upon his Exit. His Soul is no ſooner ſeparated from his Body, but ſome have ſent it to Hades, ſome to Purgatory, and ſome made it ſleep till the Reſurrection. At the Reſurrection, they have given him the ſame individual Particles, which compoſed his Body before, (as if neceſſary to his Identity) without ſaying in what Period of his Life: and have had ſo groſs an Imagination as to think, that the ſame Body is to paſs with him to Heaven; which we are told Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit. After the Reſurrection ſome have given a Reign of a thouſand Years on Earth to the Righteous; and others, more kind, ſent them directly to Heaven. Vain Speculations!

[f] See BURNET's Archæologiæ Philoſophicæ, Lib. 2. c. 7, &c.

Is

Is it not ſufficient for Man to know, that he will be miſerable, if bad; and happy beyond Expreſſion, if righteous. The particular Deſcription of a Country cannot be had, from which *no Traveller returns.*

Yet theſe Men have ruſhed boldly into Heaven and Hell; and, like Poets, deſcribed the Torments of the one, and Joys of the other; tho' the Scriptures ſay, theſe laſt are ſuch, as neither Eye hath ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. They have been pleaſed even to fix the Scene, and tell you where Hell is; tho' they do not all agree in what Latitude it lies. Some imagining you muſt deſcend to it, and that it is a Dark, Covered Place, are pleaſed to fix it near the Center of our Globe; which is the loweſt Place, in the Conception of us poor Mortals, who creep on the Surface of it. Others conceiving it to be a very hot Place,

Place, have been pleaſed to fix it in the Sun, where poor Souls will be burnt: and others in a Comet, where they will be ſeverely ſcorched as they paſs by the Sun. It is more difficult for them to find out the Heaven, to which we are to aſcend: for, as in our Notion we aſcend, when we remove from any Part of our Globe, our Globe being the Standard or Point from which we ſet out on our Journey, the Roads may branch out from thence to any Part of the Univerſe.

Not ſatisfied with deſcribing Hell, and the Torments of the Damned, they have entered into the Counſels of the Almighty; and blaſphemouſly aſſumed to themſelves a Right of judging of the Juſtice of his Determinations. GOD, ſay they, foreſaw all Mens Actions, and that ſome would ſin: they therefore can ſcarce reconcile it to his Mercy, if from Eternity he deſtined ſome to be Veſſels of his Wrath; or even gave them a Capacity

of

of ſinning, foreſeeing they would ſin; tho' he gave them a Will free to determine their Actions, and a Power to act according to that Determination. If GOD, ſay they, is not the Cauſe of Sin in Man, he placed him amidſt Temptations, which are the Occaſion of it: and therefore they think the Scripture not well underſtood, when it mentions everlaſting Puniſhment; too great, they think, to be inflicted by a merciful and juſt GOD, on a Creature whom he made ſo frail, and for Crimes committed in a momentary Life. Thus, like the Devils in our great Poet,

'They reaſon high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,
Fixt Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge abſolute,
And find no End in wandring Mazes loſt.
Vain Wiſdom all, and falſe Philoſophy!

[g] MILTON, Book II.

It

It was not given to Man to know theſe things in this Life; and therefore he ſhould not diſquiet himſelf in vain about them. Shall an Animal of ſo limited an Underſtanding, creeping on the Surface of this little Globe, having only a few Objects within the Reach of his Senſes, little acquainted with their Nature, and as little with the Connection and Dependence of one Being on another, ſet himſelf up as Dictator of the Univerſe? He cannot know the Schemes of Providence, much leſs alter them. GOD made Man, and not he himſelf. He created him for his Pleaſure, and at his Pleaſure he will diſpoſe of him. He alone knows through what new Scenes he muſt paſs; and he will conduct him through them to anſwer the Ends of his Providence. Let Man reſign himſelf in full Confidence on that Sovereign Being, who is juſt and merciful to all his Crea-

tures; and daily ſay, "Not my will, "but thine be done."

But tho' theſe Points cannot be known yet they are important: and therefore Diſputes about them, tho' vain, are not ſo ridiculous, as thoſe, which have been raiſed by the Clergy about meer Ceremonies and Trifles of their own Invention. I have mentioned ſome concerning Times and Places and Forms of Worſhip, and of adminiſtring the Sacraments; concerning Ordination, different Orders or Degrees of Clergy, Eccleſiaſtical Government, and Cenſures. Who can forbear laughing to hear of Diſputes about a Cloak or a Surplice; about placing a Table or a Pulpit; about ſitting or kneeling; about turning to the Eaſt or Weſt; bowing or other Geſtures; faſting or feaſting; eating Fiſh or Fleſh; in Lent or out of it; and thoſe numberleſs Rites, which Papiſts retain? many of which the Proteſtants rejected by Authority at

the

the Reformation; and many of which by their own Reaſon they do ſince reject.

Such Diſputes would have been thought incredible; becauſe they concern things not enjoined in Scripture, and are inconſiſtent with the Spirit of it: if they ſtood not recorded in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory. Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory! the moſt inſignificant, leaſt entertaining, and leaſt inſtructive, of all Hiſtories! A Narration either of moſt impertinent Trifles, or elſe of moſt ſhocking Crimes! A Collection of the Ignorance, Folly, Credulity and Superſtition of weak Men; of the Knavery, Forgery, and Impoſition, of the Pride, Avarice, and Ambition, of the Tyranny, Perſecution, and Cruelty, of worldly Men! and the greateſt Reproach to Chriſtianity! If there are many Martyrs, whoſe Memory is ever to be honoured; there are more Monſters, whoſe Memory is ever to be deteſted: who have perverted the beſt things into the worſt;

worſt; and under the Name of CHRIST's Religion have eſtabliſhed that of Anti-chriſt.

Such Diſputes are at preſent little regarded in this Iſland: and may they never return again to diſturb the Quiet of it! The beſt way to prevent it is for the Clergy not to endeavour to impoſe their own Authority on Mankind; but to leave the Goſpel (as it is and ought to be) the ſole Standard of Faith and Practice: to deliver it without Myſtery to the Ignorant; and to encourage and invite all, that are capable, to examine and judge of it by their own Reaſon. Nothing can be more for the Advantage of Chriſtianity: nothing can be more for their own Eaſe, Honour, and Intereſt: for they will always (and deſervedly) be reſpectable, when they ſerve the Ends of their Profeſſion; and always contemptible, when they would make their Profeſſion ſerve other Ends.

Reconcile Scripture to Reason: that is the true Way to ſupport its Credit and Authority. It is not ſufficient to ſay it is the Word of GOD: that does not prove it. Or to ſay, that the Books, in which it is contained, are canonical; for whatever Numbers pronounce them ſo, their Opinion cannot make them the Word of GOD, or convince others, that they are ſo. It is not ſufficient to ſay, they were found in ſuch a Place, or with ſuch a Nation, or were delivered by Perſons inſpired. What Place, Nation, or Perſon can claim ſuch a peculiar Privilege? If they do, the Truth of ſuch a Claim muſt be ſubmitted to the Examination and Determination of Reaſon.

What Proofs are there to induce us to think the Old Teſtament the Word of God?

The Hiſtorical Part of it, if falſe, proves it to be not the Word of GOD; and, if true, does not prove it to be ſo, for a

true History may be delivered without Divine Inspiration. It is a History, that gives an Account of Transactions long before any other Histories; and therefore can neither be confuted nor confirmed by them. Its Authority must rest on the Credibility of the Facts related, the Credit of the Relators, the Completion of their Prophecies, or the Excellence of their Instruction.

The Facts related are of great Importance to Mankind. The short Abstract of the History before the Deluge contains a general Account of what is most interesting in that Period. An Account of the Creation of the first Man and Woman: a Fact which must have necessarily existed at some Time and Place. And why may we not believe them to have been the Persons whom MOSES describes; when to confirm it, he brings down their Genealogy to NOAH? The allegorical Account of the Manner of their Forma-

tion, of their happy Situation, of their yielding to the Temptation of Vice, of their Misery after it, of GOD's sweeping one wicked Race of their Descendants from the Face of our Globe, and replenishing it from a righteous Family, are Events very rational, and therefore very credible: especially if we consider MOSES (the Author) as a Person very worthy of Credit, and who, by Tradition, might have very good Information.

From the Deluge his History chiefly concerns the Jews: a People not considerable in Power as a Nation; but extremely so, as the only People who professed the Worship of the true GOD, when all others were sunk in Idolatry. Therefore, if any where upon Earth we are to expect a true Account of the Original of the present Race of Mankind, or of GOD's past or future Dispensations concerning them, we may reasonably expect it there or no where. We find it there,

there, and no where elſe. And it is come down to us authenticated in the beſt Manner any Hiſtory can be. The Law of MOSES has always been obſerved by the Jews, who have always acknowledged MOSES to be the Author of it. What Reaſon is there then to doubt it? It was always preſerved in their Memory and Tradition, as well as in Writing: and [h] when, through the Impiety of ſome of their Kings, it was neglected, a Copy was retrieved by JOSIAH. They were found acting under it before the Deſtruction of the Aſſyrian Empire, during the whole Perſian and Grecian Empires, and under the Roman Government till the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem: and tho' ſince diſperſed over the whole Earth, they adhere to it to this Day; every where bearing Teſtimony to the Truth of the Hiſtory, ſtronger than any other Hiſtory ever received. And if we believe the Hiſtory

[h] PRIDEAUX's Connection, Vol. I. p. 260.

as far as MOSES carries it, we have no Reaſon to diſbelieve the Thread of it afterwards, every Part of which ſtands as particularly recorded, and in a more correct Manner than that of moſt other Nations.

The only Objection to the Credit of any Part of it is, the Relation we meet with of ſome Miracles, which could gain Credit in no other Book. Now, the Queſtion with me is not whether the thing is poſſible or no; for all Things are poſſible with GOD; and the Author of the material World can alter the common or natural Courſe of things in it as he pleaſes. The only Queſtion is, when we have Reaſon to conclude and believe that he does ſo? And, I think, we can only judge of that by this one Rule, viz. whether the Miracle related is to promote ſome great and good End of Providence: and if we cannot diſcover that, we have Reaſon to ſuſpend our Belief; or rather to believe, that it was told to ſerve ſome End

of

of the Relator, who by impoſing ſuch Stories might hope to acquire Honour, Power, or Authority to himſelf, or to his Nation. Let every one judge by this Criterion; and determine for himſelf: and if he cannot diſcover any great or good End in the Miracle related, he may ſafely doubt, whether that Part of Scripture is ſo authentic as the reſt; and whether it has not been corrupted.

If a Man finds a Fact related in Scripture, which he takes to be morally impoſſible, viz. inconſiſtent with GOD's Juſtice, Mercy, or Goodneſs; he has much more Reaſon to doubt: for though there may be natural, there can be no moral Miracles: GOD may direct the Courſe or Motion of Things in the material World in different Ways, and his Almighty Power be equally exerted and demonſtrated in all; but his Juſtice and Goodneſs are immutable, and their Courſe can never be interrupted. And though

Man cannot always judge aright of his Proceedings; yet he may be assured that the Judge of the whole Earth will do right.

I do not think that the History of the Old Testament acquires any new Credit, as to past Facts related in it, by being referred to in the New: for when our Saviour or his Apostles refer to any Part of it, such Reference cannot alter the past Facts: they refer to it as a known Record only, whether the Story recorded be true or false, Fiction or Reality: as I am as well understood, when I mention the Engagement of the Frogs and Mice, Pigmies and Cranes, as when I mention the Battles of Blenheim or Pharsalia. To give one Instance among many: when St. JAMES says, "You have heard of "JOB's Patience;" he does not assert, that there was or was not such a Person as JOB; but refers to the Character of a righteous and patient Man, finely described

ſcribed in the Old Teſtament, and generally known; and which was equally inſtructive whether it was real or fictitious.

There is another Part of the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, which is very peculiar to the Scriptures; and that is Prophecy, or the Hiſtory of Events before they happen. If theſe fall out in diſtant Periods of Time, as foretold; ſuch Prophecy (or anticipated Hiſtory) needs no other Proof of its Truth; or indeed of its divine Original: for GOD alone could foreſee any Series of Events at ſuch a Diſtance of Time. And when ſuch Events foretold in the Old Teſtament are referred to by the New, or applied to it, if they are juſtly referred to and applied, both theſe Books receive the greateſt reciprocal Illuſtration and Credit.

But to dwell no longer on the Hiſtorical Parts of Scripture; let us conſider the whole (both Old and New Teſtament)

as

as a religious and moral Leſſon to Mankind. Where is there, or ever was there, a Book comparable to it? If we can ſcarce forbear thinking VIRGIL, HORACE, CICERO, and other Heathen Writers inſpired, who, notwithſtanding the idolatrous Fictions of their vulgar Theology, have delivered ſuch ſublime Sentiments and Precepts; what ſhall we ſay to a Book, the only one of all Antiquity, which throughout the whole Tenor of it points out to Man one only GOD, an eternal and infinite SPIRIT, the Creator of the Univerſe, Omnipreſent, Omniſcient, Omnipotent, Wiſe, Juſt, Merciful and Good; who placed Man on this Globe, to contemplate him and his Works, to adore him, and to endeavour to imitate his Perfections; promiſing Rewards in a future State to thoſe that do ſo: and to aid him in his Duty ſent CHRIST, the only faultleſs Perſon who ever appeared amongſt Men, to teach them a Leſſon of

Love,

Love, Charity, and universal Benevolence, of Submission, Resignation, Humility, and Temperance, more perfect than ever was before delivered; set forth and exalted by Sentiments more noble, and Expressions more sublime, than can be met with in any other Writings. Have we not therefore Reason to call it the Word of GOD? that is, that the Sentiments and Precepts contained in it, were suggested by GOD to the Minds of those who published them to the World. Take it altogether, it is Divine! And if Cavils and Objections have been raised to particular Parts, they perhaps are not genuine, or not understood.

But we are not immediately to conclude, that the Scriptures are not genuine, if we do not understand them. There are many Obstacles in our Way to the right understanding of many Passages, never to be surmounted. No Writings are exempt from Errata; which

in

in ancient ones are difficult to diſcover and correct: and in Scripture, what wiſe Man will attempt to correct them? No Tranſlations come up to the Spirit of the Original; and in many Parts cannot be adapted to the preciſe Senſe of it: and how few can read the Scriptures in the Original, compared to the Generality of Mankind, who muſt truſt to Tranſlations? Difference of Style, Phraſe, and Idiom, of Laws, Manners, and Cuſtoms, in Countries and Ages diſtant from our own, neceſſarily introduce great Obſcurity; and are the Cauſe why many Parts of Scripture are not now underſtood, which might be clear at the Time and Place they were writ. A modern Reader, who is rational and impartial, will make great Allowances on theſe Accounts: and it is to be hoped, he will make a ſmall Allowance for the Weakneſs of his own Underſtanding, the common Lot of Mortality. If after due Reflection, he is not

ſatisfied

ſatisfied with his own Interpretation, he is to expect but little Aid from former Interpreters. The many Doubts remaining on ſeveral Parts of Scripture, are a Proof of the ill Succeſs of their Labours to ſettle the Opinions of the World. And ſome Reaſons may be aſſigned why many of them have ſucceeded no better. Ancient Divines have often failed from an Ignorance in natural Philoſophy, many Parts of which the Moderns are better acquainted with from Obſervation and Experience. Modern Divines have often failed from adopting the Errors of the Ancient. Modern Philoſophers often fail from a Conceit of their own Knowledge; being too apt to conclude things to be impoſſible, that fall not within the narrow Compaſs of their Obſervation and Experiments; when, on more mature Reflection, they would appear moſt agreeable to Reaſon and Nature. Some fail from adhering too much to the Letter,

ter, turning Figure, Metaphor, Allegory, and Expreſſions adapted to the Ideas of the Vulgar, into Realities. Whilſt others fail, by turning plain things into Myſteries, to raiſe the Reputation of their own Knowledge with the Vulgar, and to keep them in Awe: perſuading them there is Danger in departing from their Interpretation, or even in doubting of, or examining into their Opinions: deterring ſome from any Examination at all, and prejudicing thoſe who do examine againſt the Scriptures, by making them unintelligible by their own Interpretation; which they endeavour to force on others, in order to preſerve, as they think, an Uniformity of Opinion. Miſtaken Men! who take this Truth for a Paradox. ATTEMPTING A UNIFORMITY IN OPINION BREEDS DISSENTION: PERMITTING A LATITUDE IN OPINION BEGETS UNITY. Men will either not think of Religion at all, or they

will

will think for themselves. They can do no otherwise; for their particular Ideas arise from the Impression of Objects on their Minds; which are seen by different Men in different Lights, and under different Circumstances: and it was as much the Intention of Providence, that there should be a Difference of Opinions as of Persons: nor is it to be imagined, that GOD, who so formed Man, is offended with such Difference of Opinion on any Subject.

It is a vain Attempt to think of making Men agree in any one Religion, by forbidding them to examine into the Principles of it. Nay, it makes it impossible for them to be of that Religion, notwithstanding they profess it, or however they may comply with outward Forms, from Fashion, from Deference to Authority, or from Fear of Punishment; for Religion must arise from an inward Conviction, and there can be no Conviction without

without Examination, and weighing the Reaſons for and againſt it.

It is as vain to think of forcing Men into a Religion by attacking their Perſons or Reputation: Perſecution may make good Men Martyrs, and bad ones Hypocrites; but can never make a Man religious; for neither Blows nor Calumny are proper Arguments of Conviction.

It is as vain too to think of preſerving ſuch a Uniformity by Mens ſetting up their own Deciſions for a Guide; calling themſelves orthodox, and the reſt of the World Heretics; making it meritorious in a Man to follow their Opinions blindfold, and criminal in him, after his beſt Examination, to follow his own. If private Men differ with public Deciſions, what Wonder? when theſe Deciſions have often differed with one another: Popes have condemned Popes, and Councils Councils; travelling the World over to ſettle Points, ſome inexplicable, and others frivolous;

frivolous; and taking great Pains to make themſelves ridiculous. Which muſt always be the Caſe, when Man's Judgment, mixed with his Intereſts, Paſſions, and Infirmities, is ſet up as a Standard of Faith inſtead of the Scripture.

It was commendable in the Bereans to examine the Scriptures; which require, that every one ſhould be ready to give a Reaſon for the Hope that is in him. And it is vain to think of eſtabliſhing the Authority of Scripture, without leaving Men at liberty to examine and conſider the external and internal Evidence of the Truth of it. A Man cannot believe it to be true without ſome Reaſon for his Belief: and it is not a good Reaſon, becauſe another either does, or ſays he believes it. Nor can he believe any Part of it, that he thinks repugnant to Reaſon, which is the only Rule by which he can judge of it: and he is ſure that whatever is repugnant to right Reaſon, could not

be delivered by Men commiſſioned and inſpired by GOD.

It is vain to endeavour to ſtop a free Enquiry into the Grounds of Religion; it makes Men more eager after ſuch Enquiries. It is very imprudent; it hurts both Religion and the Clergy; for Men are apt to ſuſpect a Cauſe that is not ſuffered to come to a Trial, as well as the Advocates for it. If it is true, why are they againſt bringing it to the Teſt? If it is falſe, why would they impoſe it? If it is doubtful, why are they angry with thoſe that doubt it? Truth will bear the Light; and the more it is expoſed to it, the brighter it will appear. It is certain, that nothing hath done more Prejudice to Chriſtianity, than the trying to deter Men from ſuch Enquiries; by branding them with opprobrious Names, by inflaming others againſt them, and by alarming them with the Danger of liſtening to Reaſon; as if it was a Crime to

employ that nobleſt Talent, with which GOD hath intruſted them, and on the moſt important of all Subjects.

Chriſtianity is a good Cauſe, and will bear any Examination: to prevent an Examination is to betray, and not to defend it. Leave the Goſpel with every Man to examine; the Excellence of its Doctrine will defend it. It is to be truſted with the Laity as well as Clergy; for it makes no Diſtinction between them. Every one may underſtand the moſt neceſſary Parts of it; they want neither Popes nor Councils to explain them. It requires no Artifice to ſupport it: no falſe Miracles: no ancient Opinion, or Practice, either of Fathers or Saints, whether they were learned, able, or honeſt, or whether they were weak, credulous, or deſigning Men. Nor can any human Authority, though dignified with the Name of primitive, add the leaſt Weight to it. We ought not to truſt to Authority, but appeal to

Reaſon for the Defence of Chriſtianity; and begin by convincing Men, inſtead of ſcattering Terrors, which no wiſe Man will regard. It was monſtrous to believe, or to endeavour to perſuade others, that any one would be damned for a Miſtake in Judgment or Opinion. What an unworthy Notion muſt he have of the Deity who holds ſuch a Tenet! Inſtead of condemning his Neighbour for no Crime, he ſhould aſk Pardon of GOD for his own Impiety.

I have now delivered my ſincere Sentiments on the Subject of Chriſtianity; and with unuſual Freedom. And I thank GOD, that I live in an Age and Country in which that Freedom is not reſtrained. No Religion can ſtand, that hath not Reaſon and Nature for its Foundation: nor can there be any Certainty, that it is ſo founded, without a free Examination, and a free Declaration of every Man's Opinion, and of the Reaſons on which he

he grounds it: for ſuch Diſcuſſions are the only ready way to the Truth. Concealment, Stratagem, Force, or Authority, can never ſupport any Religion. Chriſtianity needs no ſuch Defence. It is much better defended by ſhewing it is agreeable to Reaſon and Philoſophy, which was my Deſign in writing this Treatiſe.

Before I conclude, I would willingly obviate any Miſconſtruction of what I have ſaid relating to the falſe Pretenſions and Uſurpations of the Clergy: that I may not be thought to point Reflections where I never intended them. I refer all I have ſaid on that Topic to paſt Times, and not to the preſent; to Times of Ignorance and Superſtition, and not to an Age ſo enlightened as this. I ſincerely honour the preſent Clergy of this Iſland. They are a Body of Men highly reſpectable: many of them very eminent in Learning; very few ſcandalous in Life.

I think, that they are extremely different from ſuch of their Predeceſſors, as I have deſcribed: that ſenſible of their Errors they will avoid them: and that having more enlarged Notions, as well as more Candor and Charity, they will be the great Inſtruments of GOD, to ſet Revelation in a fair and clear Light, and to recommend Chriſtianity to the Underſtanding and Affection, to the Head and Heart of Mankind. There is no thinking Perſon, who can doubt of the Exiſtence of a Deity? *That there is ſuch a Power above us, all Nature cries aloud through all her Works*, ſays [1] the moſt ingenious and beſt of our moral Writers. And no Man can believe otherwiſe, without believing this Abſurdity, that there are Effects without a Cauſe. Therefore the Atheiſt (real or pretended) is the moſt ignorant, low, and contemptible Ideot. Any Attack of his upon Religion muſt always be very weak:

[1] ADDISON.

to be pitied only, never to be dreaded. There are a much greater number of Men, who believe the Being of a GOD, but who doubt of the Truth of Revelation: diſtinguiſhed of late by the name of Deiſts. Theſe Men (if ſincerely religious) would ſoon be Converts to Chriſtianity, could they ſee it in its genuine Principles, ſtripped of the worldly Diſguiſe in which it has been dreſſed ſince its firſt Connection with the State: and would admire the Luſtre of the Gem, were it cleanſed from the Stains and Spots, which have ſo long ſullied and diſgraced it. This ought to be the Study and Labour of the Clergy: they ought to diſabuſe Mankind; and to extricate them out of that Labyrinth of Errors, into which they have been led by the Blindneſs or Wickedneſs of their former Guides. And it is with ſincere Pleaſure I obſerve them now fairly debating all Points with thoſe who publiſh

their

their Opinions to the World: appealing to Reaſon and Scripture, not to Authority and Tradition: defending their Cauſe with their own Abilities, not calling in the Aid of the State: truſting to Argument and Conviction, not to Force and Perſecution. While they proceed in a Manner ſo diſpaſſionate, and treat others with Candor and Temper, they will ever gain Proſelytes and Friends. If they give up the weak Outworks of ancient Error, and retire to the Citadel of the Goſpel, (ſtrong by Nature without Art) they will render Chriſtianity impregnable. LIKE WISE MEN, THEY WILL BUILD GOD's HOUSE, THE CHURCH, NOT UPON THE SAND, BUT UPON A ROCK. THEN LET THE RAIN DESCEND, THE FLOODS COME, AND THE WINDS BLOW, AND BEAT UPON THAT HOUSE, IT WILL NOT FALL, FOR IT IS FOUNDED ON A ROCK; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

FINIS.

4 OC 58